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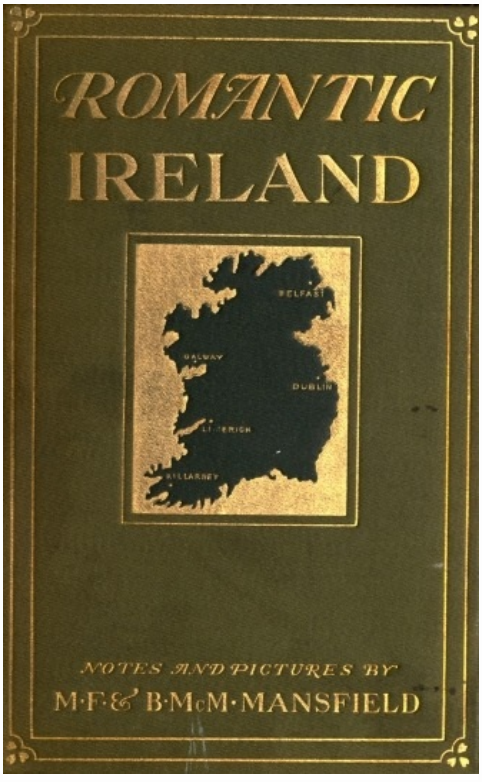

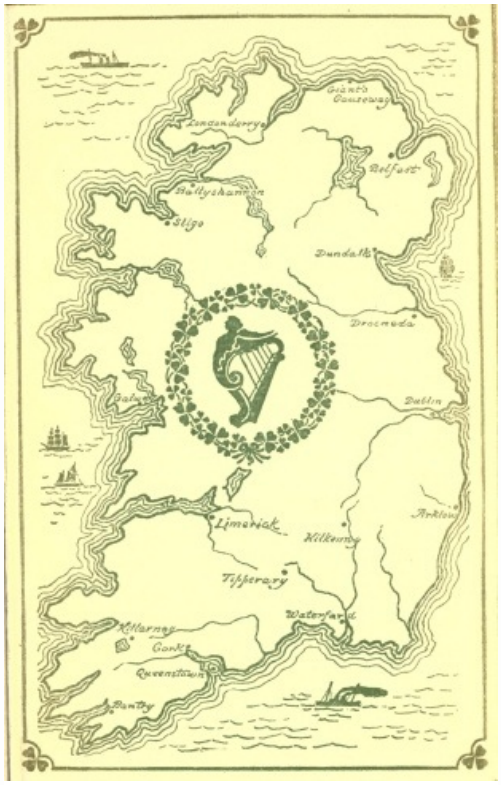

Romantic Ireland
Volume II.

CROSS AND TOWER OF MONASTERBOICE.
(See page 259).

ROMANTIC IRELAND

By
M. F. and B. McM. Mansfield

IN TWO VOLUMES
Vol. II.

Illustrated by
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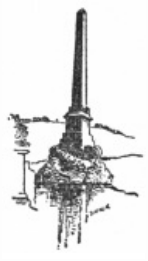

List of Illustrations

Volume II.

Romantic Ireland

CHAPTER I.

QUEENSTOWN, CORK, AND BLARNEY

QUEENSTOWN has been called a mere appendage to its harbour, and, truly, it is a case of the tail wagging the dog, though the residents of Cork will tell you it is Cork Harbour, anyway, and Queenstown is nothing but a town that was made by the American War of Independence, and by the emigration rush that, during the past sixty years, has deprived Ireland of more than half her population.

Be this as it may, the harbour dwarfs everything else about the town. Above the enormous expanse of sheltered water, the little town piles itself up on the overhanging cliffs, pink houses, yellow houses, white houses, like a veritable piece of Italy. It is always warm here, or almost always. In the winter time, the temperature is seldom severe, and, in the summer, it is one of the finest yachting centres in the United Kingdom. {2}

The “Beach” of Queenstown is truly Irish, since it is not a beach at all, but a fenced street full of shops, occupying the place where a narrow strand once ran.

Time was when Galway was a rival to Queenstown for the honour of being the link which was, by the emigrant chain, to bind the Old World to the New; but now the honour is Queenstown’s alone.

If tears,—the bitterest ever shed on earth, the hopeless tears of lonely aged parents parting from their cherished offspring; of man’s love leaving woman’s love thousands of miles behind across the seas; of friend clasping the hand of friend perhaps for the last time; of brothers and sisters parting from brothers and sisters, and all from the land that the Irishman loves as he loves his own life,—if such tears as these could quench the myriad of fairy lights that sparkle on the great harbour at dusk, {3}

QUEENSTOWN HARBOUR.

Queenstown would doubtless be the darkest city in all the world. {5}

Queenstown is drenched in tears; the air still quivers inaudibly with the wailings that have filled it through day after day of half a century or more of bitter partings. Thousands have left Ireland every year from these quays, “the torn artery through which the country’s best blood drains away year by year.” To see an emigrant-ship cast loose from the quay and steam out of the harbour is a sight, once witnessed, that will never be forgotten; that will haunt one’s very dreams in years to come.

Until 1849 Cove was the name of the city, but during a visit of Queen Victoria here at that time, her first visit to Irish soil, the name was changed, in her honour, to that which it now bears.

Cork Harbour, to most travellers, is little more than a memory; but, in reality, it is one of those beautiful landlocked waterways which, for sheer beauty and grandeur, is, in company with Bantry Bay and Dingle Bay, which are less known, only comparable to the fiords of Norway. They have not the majesty or expansiveness of many of the latter; but they have most of their attributes more subtly expressed. Indeed, Cork Harbour and {6} the river Lee, whose waters are in part enfolded by “the third city of Ireland,” Cork (Corcaig, “a marshy place”), are unapproachable in all the world for a certain subtle charm which is perhaps inexpressible in words.

As the Lee divides and encircles the city, it well illustrates Spenser’s lines:

> “The spreading Lee that like an Island Fayre,
> Encloseth Cork with his divided flood.”

Even the present-day aspect of Cork Harbour and the estuary of the river Lee from the heights of Queenstown is one of the fairest blendings of sea and shore anywhere to be seen.

Spike Island, with its convict establishment; Haulbowline, with its naval establishment; Rocky Island, with its powder magazine; Crosshaven Ring; and Rostellan Castle at once attract notice; and the eye roams with pleasure over a charming scene, enlivened with shipping of all kinds and from all ports, from the humble lugger to the steam-collier, and, finally, the ocean leviathans, which, in our strenuous times, have become {7} known as “record-breakers.”

Into Cork Harbour Sir Francis Drake retreated when hotly pursued by the Spanish fleet. He was so effectually hidden in Carrigaline River, above the village of Crosshaven, that the Spaniards spent several days in fruitless search for him, and the spot is still known as Drake’s Pool. About four miles away is the fort-defended entrance to this spacious harbour. Old Ocean seems in some freakish humour to have struck his broad palm against the barrier-strand, pushed his watery fingers into the soil, and clutched at the rocks with his foam-white nails.

From its charming situation and equability of climate, Queenstown is one of the best places in Ireland to encounter to their fulness the charms of Ireland's lovely daughters. This fact has been somewhat unduly enlarged upon in the past, it is true, but theirs is a rare and gracious beauty, and it is a general trait, so that there is a good excuse for introducing the subject once again. Some are here with such a rosy gladness; such an eglantine beauty-bloom; such dark hair and flashing eyes, soul-stirring and beaming with goodness; such a graceful mien and frankness of manner, blended with a quiet reserve; and, altogether, such a kindly air about them as to fully merit any eulogy which has been bestowed upon Irish women. One is not surprised at their being addressed by such mellifluous epithets as "*Cushla machree, asthore, mavourneen!*" These are endearments which certainly sound appropriate to all, whatever be the subtle shade of distinction. {8}

Entrance to Cork *via* the river Lee gives prominence, first of all, to Shandon's square church tower, of whose bells sang Father Prout:

"The bells of Shandon, that sound so grand on
The pleasant waters of the River Lee."

Shandon Church is, for itself, decidedly worth seeing, though by no stretch of the imagination could it be called a beautiful structure. Up a long hill and up two flights of stone steps, one climbs to the quiet little old gray church, built in 1720, with its spiring tower and sounding peal of eighteenth-century {9}

SHANDON CHURCH TOWER.

bells. Seventeen hundred and fifty is the date cast on each of the eight. {11}

St. Anne Shandon, or Sean-dun, signifying "the old fort," is situated on Shandon Hill, and is really a suburb of Cork. Its fame, in the minds of most, reverts to Father Prout's world-famous lyric, "The Bells of Shandon." If "in the mood," the listener will experience much the same emotions as are set forth in those pleasing stanzas. If not, as with most other things which have been similarly eulogized, the traveller will condemn it as mere hollow sentiment and "bosh." But the latter will, likely enough, not prove to be the case.

The church was erected on the site of the old Church of Our Lady, or St. Mary Shandon, a very ancient edifice, destroyed at the burning of the suburbs at the siege of Cork by Marlborough in 1690. In the decretal epistles of Pope Innocent III., it is mentioned as the Church of St. Mary in the Mountain. In 1536, the rector of St. Mary's, one Dominick Tyrrey, was elevated to the see of Cork, of which he was the first Protestant bishop. The Rev. Francis Mahony ("Father Prout"), though he spent much of his life abroad, is buried in the churchyard in the family vault at the foot of the tower. {12}

The tower, or steeple, which contains the celebrated bells, is of unique construction. It consists of a tower and lantern (170 feet high) of three stories each. Two sides of the steeple, west and south, are built of limestone, and two, north and east, of red stone.

The chime of bells itself does not take a high rank among campanologists, since it is not very excellent either in voice or power. Still, given certain conditions, one may well realize Mahony's (Father Prout's) sentiments:

"With deep affection
And recollection
I often think on
Those Shandon bells,
Whose sound so wild would
In the days of childhood,
Fling round my cradle
Their magic spells.

"I have heard bells chiming
Full many a clime in,
Tolling sublime in
Cathedral shrine;
While at a glib rate

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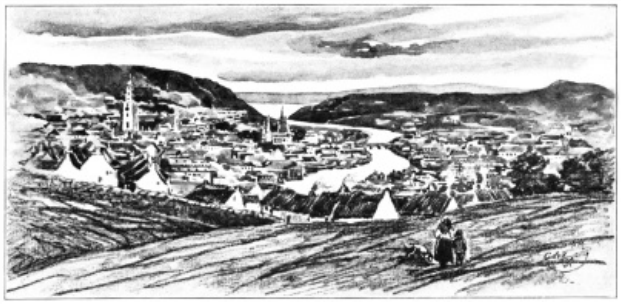

CORK.

{15}

Brass tongues would vibrate,
But all their music
Spoke nought like thine."

In the little cemetery of the monastery of the Christian Brothers, near by, rest the remains of Gerald Griffin, the novelist and poet, author of "The Colleen Bawn."

The history of Cork is too vast to chronicle here, but its interest lies rather with the more or less fragmentary recollections, which all of us have, of the traditions and legends of its environment.

In the ninth century Cork was frequently plundered by the Danes, who, in 1020, founded, for purposes of trade, the nucleus of the present city. At the time of the English invasion it was the capital of Desmond, King of Munster, who did homage to Henry II., and resigned the city to him. For receiving Perkin Warbeck, the pretender to the throne of England, with royal honours in 1493, the Mayor of Cork was hanged, and the city lost its charter, which was, however, restored in 1609.

During the civil war, Cork held out for King Charles, but its garrison was ultimately surprised and taken. {16}

When, in 1685, the bigoted and cruel Louis XIV. revoked the Edict of Nantes, Cork, though a Catholic community, opened her friendly arms to welcome the fugitive sons of France, and threw around them the mantle of her protection.

The name of St. Finbarr, the first Bishop of Cork, is so commonly referred to in connection with Southern Ireland that it is perhaps allowable to extract and reprint here, from Butler's "Lives of the Saints," the leading events of his life:

"Called by some St. Barrus, or Barrœus, he was a native of Connaught, and instituted a monastery at Lough Eirc, which lake, said the antiquarian Harris, was the hollowed basin in which the greater part of the city of Cork now sits. From this monastery and its immediate surroundings grew up the present city of Cork. St. Finbarr's disciple, St. Colman, founded the see of Cloyne, of which he became first bishop. St. Nessan succeeded St. Finbarr at the monastery and built the town of Cork. (This saint, too, is honoured, locally, on the 17th of March and 1st of December.)

"The name under which St. Finbarr was baptized was Locahan, the surname Finbarr, or Barr the White, was given to him afterward. He was Bishop of Cork seventeen years, and died at Cloyne, fifteen miles distant. His body was buried in his own cathedral at Cork, which bears his name, and his *reliques*, some years after, were put in a silver shrine and preserved in the same edifice." {17}

The Abbey of St. Finbarr was a veritable outpost of Christianity. Dungarvan owes its name, and Waterford its Christianity, to Brother Garvan of this abbey; while Brother Brian became the patron of St. Brienne in France.

Cork University was a glorious institution in its time, and many who had no prejudices in favour of Ireland have endorsed its virtues from the times of Johnson to those of Newman, Hallam, and Macaulay.

After the fall of the Western Roman Empire the schools and the abbeys of Ireland became famous. "Hither fled the timid for safety, and the leisured for learning." Students came from all lands and teachers went out to all lands.

England's Alfred came here to study, and Charlemagne drew his teachers from this "school of the West," as it was afterward called by Johnson. {18}

One ancient scrivener writes that at this period nearly all the learned were under the influence of Ireland. The great universities of Oxford, Paris, and Pavia, if not actually of Irish inception, were greatly

indebted to the learning which spread forth from the Green Isle. There is scarcely a Continental centre of learning, from Palermo to Bruges, or from Grenada to Cologne, where some Irish saint, patron, or monkish scholar is not known and revered.

Cork should be endeared to Americans by reason of the association with the city of two whose names will never be forgotten—William Penn, the Quaker, and Father Mathew, the great temperance advocate.

In proof of the successful labours of the latter, a great writer of his time stated that not a single instance of drunkenness came under his observation during a sojourn of some weeks in Southern Ireland. It is a happy change from the rollicking recklessness of the *ould* Ireland of the fictionists and comic-song

{20}

An Old-Style Irish Car

writers, which, let us hope, has gone for ever, if it ever existed. Father Mathew is buried here, in St. Joseph's Cemetery, and a bronze statue to his memory stands in Patrick Street. {21}

Cork is a picturesque and interesting old city. Its churches are mostly modern; but St. Finbarr's Cathedral stands on the site of a very old and famous church, and is itself a fine building.

Cork is one of the principal places where the genuine Irish cloak is at home, and most picturesque it is, though few of the younger women of to-day affect it. For the most part, the girls wear the universal shawl, draped over head and shoulders. The cloaks worn by the matrons and elderly women are great full-length wraps of a black or dark-blue cloth, with a wide hood. Rumour has it that they cost from five to ten pounds apiece, and last, literally, from generation to generation, being sometimes passed down as an heirloom from mother to daughter for half a century. There is a factory for the manufacture of these capes at Blarney, not far from the celebrated castle, and the product finds a large sale among lady visitors who like to spin along the roads at thirty miles an hour, and feel it unbecoming to wear the hideous motor-cap and mask of fashion. {22}

Cork abounds in "cars" of all degrees of decrepitude and luxuriousness. The Irish jaunting-car is much more a real accessory of Irish life than the shillalah or the shamrock. In Wicklow one finds the cars more numerous than elsewhere; in the west they are the most decrepit, and in Dublin the most luxurious; but in Cork, of all centres of population, they appear to be the most in use.

There has been considerable fun poked at them. They are certainly not beautiful, comfortable, or magnificent, and their drivers, like the "jarvies," "cabbies," and "cochers" of other lands, are a species apart from all other humanity.

In some parts of the country it is compulsory that the name of its owner, usually the driver, be legibly written on the tailboard of every car. This led to the story which *Punch*, if it did not invent, at least promulgated, that an inspector, who asked Pat what he meant by having his name obliterated, was met with the reply: "Ye lie, sor; it's O'Brien."

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A Modern Irish Car

There are two distinct varieties of car in Ireland, quite apart from the tourist caravans, char-à-bancs, and omnibuses in which visitors are whirled between the beauty-spots of Erin's leafy glades. The characteristics of each are plainly noted in the "inside cars" of Cork—practically extinct elsewhere—and the "outside cars." {25}

Seated in the indescribable native vehicle of Cork, which whirls one through the town with unexpected lightness and speed, you converse with the affable driver through a small hatchway, open in fine weather and closed in wet, and flanked on each side by a glass port-hole. If you ask for an explanation of the difference between the two varieties of cars, the driver will most likely reply:

"The difference between the two cyars, is it? That's simple, yer honour. Sure, the outside cyar has the wheels inside, and the inside has them outside, as ye see!"

Since Blarney, the castle, and the lake are practically a suburb of Cork, they should be considered therewith. Blarney Castle—which is situated, as the native says, "a long mile from the railway station"—is of interest more because it is an exceedingly good specimen of mediæval castle building than because of the notoriety of what Father Prout was pleased to call an "impudence-conferring" stone. {26}

As a sentiment or superstition, the alleged incidents or circumstances connected with the "Blarney Stone" are harmless enough; but far more importance has been given to its rather negative charms than is really justified.

Blarney Castle itself, with its surrounding "groves of Blarney which look so charming," and its real and tangible fabric, is of vastly appealing interest; but, usually, it has faded into insignificance in the eyes of those who contemplate the setting which has been given to the all-powerful block of stone. The glib tongue of the native has done much to perpetuate the tradition that whoever kisses it—and accompanies the act with persuasive eloquence, so perceptible in all the folk around about Cork Harbour—is for ever endowed with blessings innumerable, if not actually with superhuman power.

The "real stone," which bore the inscription, "Cormac MacCarthy Fortis Mi Fieri Fecit, A.D. 1446," now untraceable, or at least illegible, was at the north angle. It was clasped by two iron bars to a projecting buttress at the top of the castle, several feet below the level of the wall, so that, to perform the kissing feat in ancient times, it was necessary to hold on by the bars, and project the body over the wall. The candidate for Blarney honours to-day will find another "real stone," bearing the date 1703, and clasped by two iron bars, placed within the tower, where it is quite accessible. {27}

The "Reliques of Father Prout" contain this allusion to the "Stone:"

"There is a stone there,
That whoever kisses,
Oh! he never misses
To grow eloquent.
'Tis he may clamber
To a lady's chamber,
Or become a member
Of Parliament.

"A clever spouter
He'll sure turn out, or
An out and outer,
To be let alone! {28}
Don't hope to hinder him
Or to bewilder him,
Sure he's a pilgrim
From the Blarney Stone."

The pleasure-grounds surrounding the castle, which were formerly adorned with statues, grottoes, alcoves, bridges, and every description of rustic ornament, are still very beautiful, although it is true that:

"The muses shed a tear,
When the cruel auctioneer,
With his hammer in his hand, to sweet Blarney came."

And so their beauty has gradually diminished, and the fine old trees have been felled, and one looks in vain for the statues of—

"The heathen gods,
And nymphs so fair,
Bold Neptune, Plutarch,
And Nicodemus,
All standing naked
In the open air."

As Father Prout further says, the—

" ... gravel walks there
For speculation
And conversation"—

are still in good order, and to wander in— {29}

"The Groves of Blarney
. . . . . .
Down by the purling
Of sweet silent streams,"

and among the—

“ ... flowers that scent
The sweet fragrant air”—

is a most pleasant occupation for a summer’s afternoon.

Blarney Castle was built in the fifteenth century by Cormac MacCarthy, and consists, to-day, of only the massive donjon tower, perhaps 120 feet in height, and another lower portion, less substantial, though hardy enough to warrant the conjecture that, before the introduction of firearms, it must have been impregnable. It is almost as marvellous as the power attributed to the Blarney Stone that a few lines of rather cheap doggerel, containing in themselves no merit save their absurdity, should succeed in gaining a world-wide notoriety for a place which, otherwise, might not have been greatly celebrated beyond its own neighbourhood. {30}

It is altogether incomprehensible to the writer that the real charm and romance of this castle, standing up in its fifteenth-century sternness amidst one of the greenest and most smiling districts in all green Erin, have been so obscured, of late, by the popular and vulgar traditions which are perpetuated in the horse-play of holding one another head downwards over the battlements to “kiss the stone,” though this is no longer really necessary, since another more conveniently placed stone has been provided for the purpose. It is a procedure which creates much excitement among a certain class of “trippers,” and, as it keeps a certain amount of coin in circulation in the neighbourhood, it may be accounted as a perfectly legitimate enterprise in that no actual harm is done. What a pity it is, though, that Ireland has no commission for the care of historical monuments, as has France!

Macroom, *i. e.*, the Plain of Croom between Cork and Killarney, was once the home and gathering-place of the famous song-bards of the ancients, the druids.

Certainly the druids left a considerable impress upon Ireland, as they did upon Wales {31}

BLARNEY CASTLE.

and Bretagne; though it may be questioned to-day, in the light of the latest information concerning the druidical race, if their strains of melody actually did pale the cheek of beauty, or even “rise the slumbering passion of the warrior to slaughter.” {33}

Macroom, to-day, is chiefly famous for its castle. It was built by the Carews in the time of King John, shortly after the Conquest, and was subsequently in the possession of the MacCarthys. It was burned in the rebellion of 1641. The huge square keep, now covered with ivy, is all that remains of the original structure. Admiral Sir William Penn, father of the founder of Pennsylvania, was born here. Macroom, the centre of the sporting gentry of Muskerry, for whom this barony was always famous, can also boast of a band of poets racy of the soil. In 1774, the poems of John Connolly, a Macroom man, were published in Cork. He thus sings the praises of his native town:

“Whoever means to shake off gloom
Let him repair to sweet Macroom,
For here his cares he will entomb
And think no more of sorrow. {34}

“Let Mallow yield to gay Macroom,
For here we know not care nor gloom,
Here nature wears perpetual bloom,
And quite dispels our sorrow.”

Near Macroom are the celebrated Inchigeela Lakes and the still more celebrated island and lake of Gougane Barra, the retreat of St. Finbarr, who had truly an eye for the beautiful and grand when he chose such a site as this for his meditations.

On the verdant islet are the ruins of the little church, and the arched praying-stations of the pilgrims to the shrine. A holy well is also here, and its primitive materials and rude masonry indicate, at a glance, the centuries that have passed since here dwelt the “Island Saint” and anchorite, the founder of Cork. Of the

many venerable anchorites who afterward occupied the dwelling, and imitated the virtues of St. Finbarr, the last was Father Denis O'Mahony, whose tomb, erected by himself in 1700, is still to be seen.

Westward, near the border of the lake, is the "Green Valley of Desmond," enclosed by towering mountains, from the side of one of which, "Nad-na-nillar" (the Eagle's Nest), {35}

GOUGANE BARRA.

flows the tiny source of the river Lee, which runs through Cork to the sea. Here one fully appreciates the appellation, "Lone Gougane Barra." Callanan, the native bard, has sung of it as follows: {37}

"There is a green island in Lone Gougane Barra,
Where Allua of songs rushes forth as an arrow;
In deep-valleyed Desmond a thousand wild fountains
Come down to that lake from their home in the mountains.
There grows the wild ash, and a time-stricken willow
Looks chidingly down on the mirth of the billow,
As, like some gay child, that sad monitor scorning,
It lightly laughs back to the laugh of the morning.
And its zone of dark hills—oh! to see them all bright'ning
When the tempest flings out its red banner of lightning,
And the waters rush down, 'mid the thunder's deep rattle,
Like clans from their hills at the voice of the battle.
And brightly the fire-crested billows are gleaming,
And wildly from Mullagh the eagles are screaming;
Oh, where is the dwelling in valley or highland
So meet for a bard as this lone little island!
. . . . . .
Least bard of the hills, were it mine to inherit
The fire of thy harp, and the wing of thy spirit,
With the wrongs which like thee to our country has bound me, {38}
Did your mantle of song fling its radiance around me.
Still, still in those wilds may young liberty rally,
And send her strong shout over mountains and valley,
The star of the west may yet rise in its glory
And the land that was darkest be brightest in story.
I, too, shall be gone, but my name shall be spoken
When Erin awakens, and her fetters are broken;
Some minstrel will come in the summer eve's gleaming
When Freedom's young light on his spirit is beaming,
And bend o'er my grave with a tear of emotion,
Where calm Avon Buee seeks the kisses of ocean,
Or plant a wild wreath from the banks of that river
O'er the heart and the harp that are sleeping for ever."

{39}

CHAPTER II.

GLENGARRIFF AND BANTRY BAY

TWO of the most famous men in English literature have passed unstinted praise on the beauty and charm of the southern Irish coast.

If one looks at a map of the southwest of Ireland, it will be seen that its whole coast-line is broken into serrations, making harbours, islands, bays, and coves. If he should go to the coast itself, he will have revealed to him a wondrous kaleidoscope,—alternate scenes of sweet, pathetic gentleness, and stern and rugged grandeur, all full of engrossing charm.

Leaving the coast and going inland, as there is every facility for doing, one finds the finest lakes in the United Kingdom; and, if there are no Mont Blancs or Matterhorns, there are, at least, beautiful hills and mountains with no less charm and none of their difficulty of access. The great Atlantic waves beat against the {40} wild rocks of the south Irish coast; but the Gulf Stream gives warmth of an almost subtropical mildness to the fresh sea air, and the lowlands are enriched by the soft rains which wash the hills and fall into the great arms of the sea, called Bantry Bay, Kenmare River, and Dingle Bay.

Farther north is the ample estuary of the river Shannon and Galway Bay, each with much the same characteristics. To take a steamer from Cork for a tour of the southwest coast will form a unique experience in the itinerary of most folk. Rounding Cape Clear, the small coasting-steamer makes the first stop at the little village of Schull, which stands at the farther extremity of an almost landlocked bay. Here the land on three sides gently shelves to low ranges of verdant hills, while the harbour is speckled with its fishing craft.

Leaving Schull, a half-hour or more is passed before we are clear of the many rocky islands of its harbour and come to a view of Brow Head, with its signal-station. Mizen Head and Sheep's Head are seen in their turn; {41}

BANTRY BAY.

and the dawn finds the ship snugly anchored at Berehaven. Here at Castletown-Berehaven we are at the {43} home station of the Channel fleet during the autumn manœuvres. Before us is the grand panorama of Glengarriff and the mountains which shelter Killarney's lakes; while seaward is only the vast surge of the Atlantic.

The splendid bay of Bantry, which takes its name from the town which lies sheltered at its head, is unsurpassed as a harbour and roadstead throughout the world. Here the sturdy Atlantic swell, blue as sapphires, rolls in great lashes of foam; and Berehaven, just inside the Bear or Bere Island, is the base of the yearly autumn manœuvres of the English Channel fleet. From any view-point this rugged, walled bay is more than impressive,—more impressive, even, than Glengarriff itself, which lies still farther inland, its circumference dotted with weed-embroidered boulders. Bantry Bay is twenty-one miles in length; from three to five in width; and has a depth, in parts, as great as 220 feet. Berehaven and Castletown, which are nearest the open sea, lie just inside a jagged fang, which, once rounded, opens up an obscure aperture in the coast- {44} line, and discloses a harbour in which, truly, all the fleets of the world might lie at anchor.

Twice the French fleet invaded Bantry Bay. The first time, in 1689, in aid of James II.; and the second, in 1796, by the ill-favoured expedition organized by General Hoche, when the *Surveillante* was engulfed, and the foe-laden fleet ultimately took their departure without disgorging their army. This latter fleet, which had been arrayed for the invasion of Ireland by Carnot and Clarke, with Theobald Wolfe Tone as the organizer of the Irish Republicans, consisted of twenty-six sail, with a force of nearly seven thousand men. The O'Sullivans were the ancient chieftains or princes of this territory; and, to-day, quite half the population of Castletown, says an imaginative and rollicking Irish writer, are of the same name, the other half being Murphys.

As a result of this unfortunate venture, Wolfe Tone quit the country at the pleasure of the authorities, and went to America. Ultimately he returned to France, where he again carried on his conspiracy, occupying {45} himself in luring Irishmen from among the prisoners at Brest to enlist in the French service. This procedure was accomplished by "sending the poor fellows large quantities of wine and cognac, a fiddle, and some *filles Francaises*;" and, when Pat's heart was soft with love and warm with passion, Tone induced him to sign on in the service which had adopted him.

It is difficult to characterize a man of Wolfe Tone's kind. Rash and criminal though he was, it is hard to condemn him altogether. He hated England cordially; but he was not alone among Irishmen in that. Indeed, he said: "I like the French, with all their faults and with the guillotine at their head, a thousand times better than I like the English."

Whiddy Island, which lies just off the town of Bantry, was a former stronghold of the O'Sullivans of Bere; and an imposing castled ruin tells of the times when violence, even in such a spot as this, had to be met by repression. Bantry lies in a hollow at the head of the bay. The whole bay affords a succession of prospects magnificent and grand. Its views vary from the softness of a landscape nocturne to the rugged splendour of a {46} realistic impression. Weak as are these similes, they can only mark the sense of contrast which the scene awakens. Bantry is in its way an active little place, and, like Castletown, rejoices in a series of sign-boards to which the prefix "O" is all but universal. Its tiny port is busy; and its people are apparently imbued with an industry not always to be noted in these parts.

Near Castletown-Bere is Dunboy Castle, two miles away along a road which in summer is hedgerowed with honeysuckle and clematis, ferns and lichen-covered rocks. The present castle of Dunboy is modern, and is therefore less appealing than the older fabric, which so successfully defended itself against Sir George Carew. The story of the chiefs of Dunboy is familiar in outline to most; but the story of its famous siege, when MacGeoghegan fought Dunboy against Carew and his interesting army of four thousand men, has often been overlooked in favour of more theatrically magnificent performances.

Why this should be so, it is hard to realize. History has recorded with fidelity and minutely many of its incidents, and, in "The Two Chiefs of Dunboy," it has inspired an historical romance of the first rank. {47}

When Donal took his last farewell of his once proud home, it had become a smoking, blood-clotted ruin.

"The halls where mirth and minstrelsy
Than Beara's wind rose louder,
Were flung in masses lonelily,
And black with English powder."

The tragic story of the siege is thus condensed: The garrison consisted of only 143 chosen fighting men, who had but a few small cannons; while the comparatively large army which assailed them was well supplied with artillery and all the means of attack. At length, on the 17th of June, when the castle had been nearly shot to pieces, the garrison offered to surrender if allowed to depart with their arms; but their messenger was immediately hanged, and the order for the assault given.

Although the proportion of the assailants in point of numbers was overwhelming, the storming party were resisted with the most desperate bravery. From turret to turret, and in every part of the crumbling {48} ruins, the struggle was successively maintained throughout the livelong day. Thirty of the gallant defenders attempted to escape by swimming; but the soldiers, who had been posted in boats, killed them in the water; and, at length, the surviving portion of the garrison retreated into a cellar, to which the only access was by a narrow, winding flight of stone steps. Their leader, MacGeoghegan, being mortally wounded, the command was given to Thomas Taylor, the son of an Englishman, and the intimate friend of Captain Tyrell, to whose niece he was married.

Nine barrels of gunpowder were stowed away in the cellar; and Taylor declared that he would blow up all that remained of the castle, burying himself and his companions, with their enemies, in the ruins, unless they received a promise of life. This was refused by the savage Carew, who, placing a guard upon the entrance to the cellar, as it was then after sunset, returned to the work of slaughter next morning. Cannon-balls were discharged among the Irish in their last dark retreat; and Taylor was forced by his companions to surrender {49} unconditionally. When, however, some of the English descended into the cellar, they found the wounded MacGeoghegan, with a lighted torch in his hand, staggering to throw it into the gunpowder. Captain Power thereupon seized him by the arms, and the others despatched him with their swords. Fifty-eight of those who had surrendered were hanged that day in the English camp, and others a few days after; so that not one of the 143 heroic defenders of Dunboy survived. On the 22d of June the remains of the castle were blown up by Carew with the gunpowder of the besieged.

It was Thackeray, who, if possessed of a certain smugness, was often moved by patriotic and sometimes by charitable motives, said:

"What sends picturesque tourists (What, if you please, Mr. Thackeray, are picturesque tourists?) to the Rhine or Saxon Switzerland, when, within five miles of the pretty inn at Glengarriff, there is a country of the magnificence of which no pen can give an idea? I would like to be a great prince, and bring a train of painters over to make, if they could, and according to their several capabilities, a set of pictures of the place. Were {50} such a bay lying upon English shores, it would be the world's wonder."

Glengarriff is all that Thackeray pictured it in prose. It is more than that,—more, indeed, than is within the power of words to describe, though its beauty is somewhat of the stage-scenery and landscape-painting order.

Travellers from all the corners of the earth have raved over its charm; but they all fail utterly to describe the insinuating peacefulness of its mirrored sky and emerald-clad hills. No one but the artist can at all successfully portray its moods: at times brilliant with sunshine and verdure, and again, sombre and mist-laden with the rains of autumn; but never, or seldom ever, even in the most abnormal winter, bare or bleak. Indeed, this region, together with many others in Ireland, has been, by many eminent scientists, proclaimed one of nature's most famous *sanitoria*.

Prince Puckler Muskau, in his tour of Ireland, wrote thus of Glengarriff: "The climate is most favourable for vegetation, moist and so warm that not only azaleas and rhododendra, and all sorts of evergreens stand {51}

GLENGARRIFF BAY.

abroad through the winter, but, in favourable aspect, even camellias, dates, pomegranates, magnolias, etc., attain their fullest beauty.” Lord Macaulay and Sir David Wilkie called it the fairest spot in the British Isles. {53}

The former’s stanzas, as given below, are perhaps not of his usual heroic order, and may, once and again, appear unduly sentimental, but they are emphatically true and appreciative:

“Hail, charming scene! Glengarriff’s bay,
Yon mountains, streams, and dells,
The Atlantic waters’ foaming spray,
Creation’s wonder tells.

“Hail, Bantry’s noble harbour deep,
Where Britain’s fleet may ride,
And giant ships, in safety’s keep,
May in or outward glide.

“Thy glorious waters, green and gemmed,
With beauteous islands crowned,
While the enchanting scene is hemmed
With purple hills around.

“At morning’s dawn or evening’s shade
Thy glory’s still the same:
And ever will be so arrayed,
With English tourists’ fame.”

An enthusiastic American, who subscribed himself as from New Jersey, has left the following lines upon the register of the hotel at Glengarriff: {54}

ADIEU TO GLENGARRIFF

“Glengarriff! on thy shaded shore
I’ve wandered when the sun was high,
Have seen the moonlit showers pour
Through thy umbrageous canopy:
. . . . . .
Glengarriff! might I but delay,
. . . . . .
I would not say good-bye to thee:
Alas! far distant is the day
When I thy charms again may see.
Yet, in the land remote of mine,
Remembrance will thy grace renew,
So, as thou canst not call me thine,
Glengarriff! loveliest, best, adieu!”

This valleyed and landlocked harbour of Glengarriff terminates Bantry Bay, which, says Mr. Kipling, “lies just to the eastward of the Fastnet, that well-worn mile-post of the Atlantic liner.”

In Kipling’s “Fleet in Being,” which first appeared in the *Morning Post* (London) in {55}

HUNGRY HILL.

1898, and of which even this author's most ardent devotees appear too frequently to have no knowledge, {57} are to be found some wonderful bits of descriptions of Irish coast scenery. Therein are recounted virile experiences and observations on board the flag-ship of the Channel fleet during the autumn manœuvres; and, from Lough Swilly in the north to Bantry Bay in the south, the author depicts, with a master mariner's fidelity, the characteristics of the coast-line,—its harbours, bays, headlands, and ports,—in so incomparable a fashion that it is to him that we must accord the rapidly increasing appreciation of, and interest in, the charms of Ireland as a tourist resort.

Coupled with the charms of Glengarriff's bay is its sister attraction—no less winsome—of the monarch mountain of these parts, Sliabhna-goil (*i. e.*, "the Mountain of the Wild People"), more commonly called "Sugar Loaf." Why it is so named is, of course, obvious to all who see it; but it is a rank departure from its original appellation.

This mountain's taller brother Dhade (now Hungry Hill) rears itself in grim severity a little to the {58} westward. Both are conspicuously coast-line elevations of the first rank.

Time will allow but a glance at the many beauties of this region; but the leaves of memory will press the fragments of romance, in an all-enduring fashion, to all who come immediately beneath their spell.

One legend, repeated here from a source well known, must suffice. It refers to the mountain pass of Keim-an-eigh, "the path of the deer," through which, according to M'Carthy's "Bridal of the Year," and in reality, too:

"Streams go bounding in their gladness
With a Bacchanalian madness."

M'Carthy has put the legend into elegant verse, known of all lovers of Irish song as "Alice and Una."

Briefly the tale runs thus: A young huntsman, Maurice by name, had all day pursued a fawn, which at evening fled for refuge—

"To a little grassy lawn—
It is safe, for gentle Alice to her saving breast hath drawn
Her almost sister fawn."

A romantic affection then sprang up between the two humans, the hunter and the maid; and this magnet {59} drew the youth often hither, in spite of the fact that Una, a fairy queen, was passionately enamoured of the gallant deer-chaser. One evening, as he was wending his way to see his lady fair, the moon grew dark, a great storm arose, and the lovelorn Maurice lost himself in the wood. All this was of course due to the jealous fairy in true legendary fashion. At length he falls in with a noble jet-black steed, which he mounts. This grim shape proves to be a certain dreaded Phooka (the same symbol is renowned throughout Ireland, and has been traced even to the legends of the Northmen), a genii of Una's, who immediately rushes off with the youth through glen and valley, stream and forest, up and down the mountain sides:

"Now he rises o'er Bearhaven, where he hangeth like a raven—
Ah! Maurice, though no craven, how terrible for thee!
To see the misty shading of the mighty mountains fading,
And thy winged fire-steed wading through the clouds as through a sea! {60}
Now he feels the earth beneath him—he is loosened—he is free,
And asleep in Keim-an-eigh."

In his trance-dream he hears the rumble of crashing thunder. The rock opens and displays within a scene of revelry and joy, to which a page bids him welcome, and ushers him through a brilliant assemblage to the very throne of the Queen-fairy Una. She smiles graciously upon him; urges him to leave the world and all its woes to become one of her happy subjects; and promises him that, if he will but take the oath of allegiance, she herself will deign to be his bride. Spellbound by such an appeal, his lips are all but ready to utter the irrevocable vow.

“While the word is there abiding, lo! the crowd is now dividing,
And, with sweet and gentle gliding, in before him came a fawn;
It was the same that fled him, and that seemed so much to dread him,
When it down in triumph led him to Glengarriff’s grassy lawn,
When from rock to rock descending, to sweet Alice he was drawn,
As through Keim-an-eigh he hunted from the dawn.”

{61}

“The magic chain is broken—no fairy vow is spoken—
From his trance he hath awoken, and once again is free;
And gone is Una’s palace, and vain the wild steed’s malice,
And again to gentle Alice down he wends through Keim-an-eigh.
The moon is calmly shining over mountain, stream, and tree,
And the yellow sea-plants glisten through the sea.

. . . . . .

“The sun his gold is flinging, the happy birds are singing,
And bells are gaily ringing along Glengarriff’s sea;
And crowds in many a galley to the happy marriage rally
Of the maiden of the valley and the youth of Keim-an-eigh;
Old eyes with joy are weeping, as all ask, on bended knee,
A blessing, gentle Alice, upon thee.”

{62}

CHAPTER III.

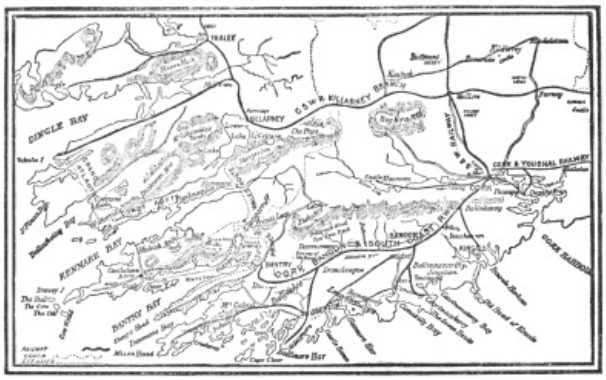
KILLARNEY AND ABOUT THERE

KILLARNEY is a considerable town, rather prim and staid and too offensively well kept to be wholly appealing. It is by no means handsome of itself, nor are its public buildings.

The chief industry is catering, in one form or another, to the largely increasing number of tourists who are constantly flocking thither.

The value of Killarney, as a name of sentimental and romantic interest, lies in its association with its lakes and the abounding wealth of natural beauties around about it.

Torc Mountain and waterfall, Muckross, Cloghereen, the Gap of Dunloe and its castle, the upper, middle, and lower lakes, Purple Mountain, Black Valley, Eagle's Nest, and Innisfallen are all names with which to call up ever living memories of the fairies of legend {63}



KILLARNEY AND ABOUT THERE

and folk-lore, and of the more real personages of history and romance. {64}

To recount them all, or even to categorically enumerate them, would be impossible here.

There is but one way to encompass them in a manner at all satisfactory, and that is to make Killarney a centre, and radiate one's journeys therefrom for as extended a period as circumstances will allow. The guide-books set forth the attractions and the ways and means in the usual conventional manner, but it is useless to expect any real help from them.

The true gem of Killarney's many charms is without question Lough Leane and Innisfallen (Monk's Robe Island), which lies embosomed in the lower lake.

Yeats, the Irish poet, spent the full force of his lyric genius in the verses which he wrote with this entrancing isle for their motive.

Robert Louis Stevenson is reported to have said that, of all modern poets, none has struck the responsive chord of imagination as did this sweet singer with the following lines:

"And I shall have some peace there,
For peace comes dropping slow,
Dropping from the veils of the morning

{65}

ST. FINIAN'S ORATORY, INNISFALLEN.

{67}

To where the cricket sings;
There midnight's all a glimmer
And noon a purple glow,
And evening full of the linnet's wings.

"I will arise and go now,
For always, night or day,
I hear lake water lapping,
With low sounds by the shore;
While I stand on the roadway,
Or on the pavements gray,
I hear it in the deep heart's core."

Moore's description is perhaps as appropriate, but it is no more beautiful:

"Sweet Innisfallen, fare thee well,
May calm and sunshine long be thine!
How fair thou art let others tell,—
To feel how fair shall long be mine."

From Glengarriff to Killarney *via* Kenmare is a long-drawn sweetness of prospect, which it is perhaps impossible to duplicate for its sentimental charm,—an ability to appreciate which belongs to us all, even if only to a limited extent.

The road from County Cork to County Kerry—and one journeys only by road from Bantry Bay to Dingle Bay, *via* Kenmare and Killarney, the age of steam not yet having arrived at these parts—winds fascinatingly {68} up and down hill and dale, diving suddenly through a tunnelled rock, when a transformation takes place, and one leaves the ruggedness and freshness of Bantry Bay for the more or less humid fairy-land of the region about Killarney. The view ahead is peculiarly grand in its contrast with that left behind. Down the beetling precipices along which the road is clinging to its sterile sides, one traces the valley beneath until it blends with the silvery surface of Kenmare River. From Kenmare, the way to Killarney is by the "Windy Gap." Beneath lies an extensive valley, and beyond is the Black Valley. Farther on are the skylines of the mountains which encompass the wild and dark Gap of Dunloe; and, farther still, will be observed the more jagged outlines of "MacGillicuddy's Reeks." Soon one beholds the first view of the beauties of far-famed Killarney, the immense valley in which repose the three lakes,—the upper, lower, and middle, with their numerous islets. *En route* from Kenmare to Killarney, one first comes to Muckross Abbey and Demesne, of which {69}

ON THE ROAD FROM CORK TO KERRY.

Sir Walter Scott has said: "Art could make another Versailles; it could not make another Muckross." This {71} is characteristic of Sir Walter and his fine sentiment; but, as Muckross is suggestive of nothing ever heard or thought of at Versailles, the comparison is truly odious.

Muckross is charming. It is thoroughly Irish; and reeks of the native soil and its people, wherein is its value to the traveller.

The scenery around about Muckross is very beautiful, but its ruined abbey is the great architectural relic of all Ireland. The ruins consist of the abbey and church, which was founded for the Order of Franciscans by McCarthy Mor, Prince of Desmond, in 1340, on the site of an old church which, in 1192, had been destroyed by fire. The remains of several of this prince's descendants are said to rest here. In the choir is the vault of the ancient Irish sept., the McCarthys, the memory of whom is preserved by a rude sculptured monument. Here also rest the remains of the Irish chieftains or princes of the houses of O'Sullivan Mor and the O'Donoghue. The great beauty of these ruins lies in its gloomy cloisters, which are rendered still more gloomy by the close proximity of a magnificent yew-tree of immense size and bulk. {72}

Killarney's lakes are irregular sheets of water lying in a basin at the foot of a very high range of mountains, set with islands and begirt with rocky and wooded heights. They are three in number; what is known as the upper, the middle or Muckross Lake, and the lower lake,—the northernmost,—more properly called Lough Leane. The middle lake is also called the Torc. A winding stream, known as the Long Range, unites the different bodies of water. The chief of the natural beauties of the Long Range is the Eagle's Nest, which rises sheer from the water's edge 1,700 feet. The upper lake is the most beautiful of all, though the smallest of the triad. It is studded with tiny islands and girt with mountain peaks, bare and stern above, but clothed with rich foliage at their base. The middle lake is also a beautiful, though more extensive, sheet, and

contains but four islands, as compared with thirty in the lower lake and six in the upper.

The Colleen Bawn Caves—reminiscent of Gerald Griffin's story, "The Colleen Bawn," {74}

Cloisters of Muckross Abbey

and Boucicault's famous play of the same name—are also in the immediate neighbourhood of the middle lake. {75} Torc Cascade and Torc Mountain lies just to the southward, and is justly famed as one of the brilliant beauties of the region, as it falls in numerous sections over the broken rock to fall finally in a precipitous torrent of foam to its ravine-bed below.

Ross Castle, like Muckross Abbey, is one of Killarney's chief picturesque ruins. It is on an island in the lower lake, and was built ages agone by the O'Donoghues. It was the last castle in Munster to surrender in the wars of the seventeenth century, giving in only when General Ludlow and his "ships-of-war," as his narrative called them, surrounded it. MacGillicuddy's Reeks lie farthest to the westward in the Killarney region. The name of this stern and jagged range sounds somewhat humourous, and in no way suggests the majesty and splendour of these hills; for they resemble the great mountains of other parts only by reason of their contrast with the low-lying land around their bases. One portion, indeed, rises a matter of 3,400 feet, and forms the most elevated peak in Ireland, grand and majestic, but, for all that, not a great mountain, as is {76} so often claimed by the proud native. The celebrated Gap of Dunloe is far more deserving for its natural scenic splendour, and, in its way, rivals anything in Ireland.

The popular method of imbibing the charm of Dunloe is a combination of picnic, *al fresco* luncheons, and donkey-riding. This answers well enough for the "tripper," but is as unsatisfying to the real lover of nature as an imitation Swiss *châlet* set out in a London park, or a Japanese tea-garden built out of bamboo poles from Africa.

The Gap of Dunloe is a grand defile, perhaps five miles in length, which can only be explored and truly enjoyed by a pilgrimage along its solitary and rugged road on foot. Its scenic aspect is gloomy and grand, with mirrored lakes, lofty mountains, and a thick undergrowth of heather and ivy. It is, however, in no manner theatrical. Through this wild glen ripples the river Lee, linking its five tiny lakes as with a silver thread.

At the upper end of the gap one emerges into "The Black Valley," somewhat apocryphally {77}

THE EAGLE'S NEST.

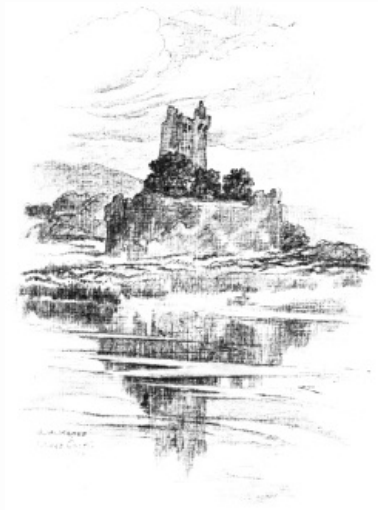
stated to be "a gloomy, depressing ravine." {79}

The sun, it appears, does not shine down its length for long in the day, as it is flanked on either side by precipitous hills. The average imagination will not, however, conjure up any very dark suspicions with regard to its past, judging from the aspect of the valley between the hours of nine in the morning and two in the afternoon. Both before and after these hours there is no sunlight; and, because of the dense, long-reaching shadows which are projected across it, it was so named.

There is a good week's rambling here to spots already famed in history for their beauty; but one must search them out for himself as a personal experience.

England's poet laureate has written in praise of Killarney in a fashion which should please his severest critics, those who have mourned the lack of a single thought in his verse. This is certainly not true with regard to his prose, which, in the following lines, so justly and appropriately describes the charm of South-west Ireland:

"Vegetation, at once robust and graceful, is but the fringe and decoration of that enchanting district. The {80} tender grace of wood and water is set in a framework of hills,—now stern, now ineffably gentle; now dimpling with smiles, now frowning and rugged with impending storm; now muffled and mysterious with mist, only to gaze out on you again with clear and candid sunshine. Here the trout leaps, there the eagle soars; and there, beyond, the wild deer dash through the arbutus coverts, through which they have come to the margin of the lake to drink, and, scared by your footstep or your oar, are away back to the crosiered bracken or heather-covered moorland. But the first, the final, the deepest and most enduring impression of Killarney is that of beauty unspeakably tender, which puts on at times a garb of grandeur and a look of awe, only in order to heighten by passing contrast the sense of soft, insinuating loveliness. How the missel-thrushes sing, as well they may! How the streams and runnels gurgle and leap and laugh! For the sound of journeying water is never out of your ears; the feeling of the moist, the fresh, the vernal is never out of your heart.... There is nothing in England {81}



ROSS CASTLE

or Scotland as beautiful as Killarney; ... and, if mountain, wood, and water, harmoniously blent, constitute the {83} most perfect and adequate loveliness that nature presents, it surely must be owned that it has, all the world over, no superior." {84}

CHAPTER IV.

AROUND THE COAST TO LIMERICK

IT is at Fastnet that the great incoming Atlantic liners, bound for Queenstown, or through St. George's Channel to Liverpool, first make land and run up their four-deep strings of signals; where, as Mr. Kipling says:

"Every day brings a ship,
Every ship brings a word;
Well for him who has no fear,
Looking seaward, well assured
That the word the vessel brings
Is the word that he should hear."

Beyond Bantry Bay, Black Bull Head passes on the starboard, and, soon after, Dursly Head and Dursly Island. The island is said to contain a population of over five hundred, with no priest, no public house, and no constabulary. A veritable Arcadia! {85}

THE GAP OF DUNLOE.

Bolus Head, Skelligs Rocks, and Bray Head passed, one comes to Valentia Island and the entrance to Dingle Bay. One of the most fondly recalled of all Irish legends is that of the landing of the Milesians, as they came up through the Biscayan Bay upon what they then knew as "Innis Ealga"—the Noble Isle. Then it was ruled by three brothers, princes of Tuatha de Danaan, after whose wives (who were also three sisters) the island was alternately called, Eire, Banva, and Fiola. By these names Ireland is still frequently known to the poets. Whatever difficulties or obstacles beset the Milesians in landing, they at once attributed to the "necromancy" of the Tuatha de Danaans. When the Milesians could not discover land where they thought to sight it, they simply agreed that the Tuatha de Danaans had, by their black arts, rendered it invisible. At length they descried the island, its tall blue hills touched by the last beams of the setting sun; and from the galleys there arose a shout of joy. Innisfail, the Isle of Destiny, was found! {87}

The legend has furnished Moore the excuse for launching into melody again. He relates it as follows: {88}

"They came from a land beyond the sea,
And now o'er the western main
Set sail, in their good ships, gallantly,
From the sunny land of Spain.
'Oh, where is the isle we've seen in dreams,
Our destin'd home or grave?'
Thus sung they, as by the morning's beams,
They swept the Atlantic wave.

"And lo, where afar o'er ocean shines
A sparkle of radiant green,
As though in that deep lay emerald mines,
Whose light through the wave was seen,
' 'Tis Innisfail—'tis Innisfail!'
Rings o'er the echoing sea,
While bending to heav'n the warriors hail
That home of the brave and free."

Valentia—the most westerly railway-station in Europe, says Bradshaw—is the true spot where West meets East; where the New World first receives its introduction to the Old.

More than half a century ago, the shores of this spacious sheet of landlocked water were selected by the great Duke of Wellington and others as the terminus of a railway which was to be the first link in the chain which was {89}

THE BLACK VALLEY.

to bind the Old World and the New, and to join the ocean liners that were run from America to Valentia, as they now do to Queenstown. The project fell through, but the island was afterward selected as the old-world end of the Atlantic cable of 1865, and also that laid by the leviathan steamship, the *Great Eastern*, in 1866. The principal village on the island is called Knightstown. If favoured with a fresh westerly breeze, one beholds from the hillside a scene of grandeur unsurpassed. The ocean engages in conflict with the rugged headlands rising hundreds of feet out of the sea, and hurls its foaming breakers with ceaseless rhythm against the base of the rocks, only to be rolled back in spray and foam. All outside is a scene of wild magnificence, while, such is the perfect shelter, the harbour itself, under all stress of weather, is as placid as a summer lake. Lord John Manners, in his notes of a tour through Ireland, describes the Atlantic here as follows: {91}

"The great waves came in with a roar like a peal of artillery, and leapt up against and over the rocks just below us, sending forth a rainbow in one direction, and an immense jet of foam in another. I do not believe I exaggerate in saying that some of the jets of foam sprung a hundred feet into the air, and then the tints! Sometimes a clear green wave would roll its huge volume on the rocks before it broke; at others, dash greenly up to it and dissolve in wreaths of purest white spray, causing, as it broke, a delicate iris to glow on the opposite rocks; while toward the west a veil of foam overhung the coast, lighted up by the golden rays of the setting sun. No words can describe the fascination of the scene." {92}

To observe the contrast between nature and the works of man, one has only to visit the isolated premises of the Anglo-American Telegraph Company. The manner in which electricity outstrips the sun in his daily round is here strikingly exemplified. Happening to be in the instrument-room at about eleven o'clock in the forenoon, one sees the operators at work, receiving from, say, Berlin, the reports of the day's markets, and transmitting the information to New York, to be served up fresh on Uncle Sam's breakfast-table, which, even at that early hour is already old news in the Eastern {93}

VALENTIA.

world. Lying just inside Valentia Island is Cahirciveen, the birthplace of Daniel O'Connell, and from this point to Dingle, across the bay, is to be seen—though from the seaward side only—the finest rock scenery on the southwest coast. Here Nature seems to have done her best to produce the picturesque with ocean and rock, twisted and split, pierced and tunnelled; every rock seems to have been torn in some gigantic struggle against total destruction, and left to still wage war against storm and tempest. The harbour of Dingle, landlocked and peaceful, is in quiet contrast to all this turmoil, though Dingle's weekly cattle fair will give the stranger the impression that he is witnessing something very akin to the fabled Donnybrook Fair, so far as riotous good humour is concerned. {95}

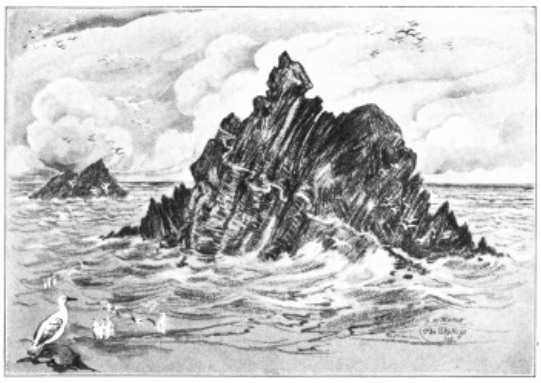
From Slea Head a magnificent view of Dingle Bay is obtained,—its indented shores flanked by the Dingle mountains stretching away for thirty miles of wonderful panorama of islands and rocks out to and around the Blasquetts. The Blasquetts are a group of eight rocky islands, two of them three miles from the coast. In the sound between these two and the mainland one of the ships of the Spanish Armada sank with all on board. {96}

Perhaps the wildest scene on the southern coast is presented by the Skelligs Rocks, off Dingle Bay, rising as pinnacles of slate, wind-swept and bare. The cliffs seem painted in bands of cream colour, produced by countless crowds of gannets—most powerful of gulls—sitting on their nests on the ledges of cliff. At the sound of an approaching steamer, the air is filled with a swarm of puffins, or sea-parrots, which fly heavily around

the crags; while, from the caves on the lower cliffs, like crowds of the smaller gulls fill the air with their shrill, screaming cry.

Limerick is a city which, by very reason of her great past and her matter-of-fact and decidedly ordinary present, presents great and disappointing contrasts. One may read the statistics in the guide-books and learn that 350,000 pigs are killed every year in the town, and of a great many other mundane things which happen here and have no interest whatsoever for him.

There is no doubt about the pigs, sausages, and various pork products, for fat swine, {97}



THE SKELLIGS ROCKS.

“razorbacks,” big pigs, and little pigs swarm everywhere. {99}

There is no escaping the Limerick pig. In single file, in battalions, as solitary scout, alive or dead, baconed and sausaged, he dominates the town. Limerick was in existence as long ago as the days of Ptolemy; was scrambled for by the Danes and the Irish kings in Alfred’s time; took the fancy of that good judge of “eligible sites,” King John, and was decorated with one of his innumerable castles, a fine old relic which still remains. The town was in the very thick of the row raised by Cromwell; and, in the wars of “the silent” William of Orange, it manufactured history as fast as its factories turn out sausages now. The name of Sarsfield, the Jacobite general, is for ever identified with Limerick. The city was taken and retaken more often than we should care to state; it was—and is—fortified up to the very limit; and, whenever anything exciting of a political nature went on, in times past, Limerick was ever to the fore front, ready to emphasize her opinions with the high-shouldered fat little cannon that have somehow got left out on the ramparts, quite forgotten {100} except by “tourist touts,” though, truth to tell, not many tourists ever come to Limerick.

To-day Limerick—in spite of its activities with respect to sausages—is no more a maker of history, but sits dozing complacently on the estuary of “the finest river in the kingdoms,” and cares not apparently for the comings and goings of the outside world.

As some poetic soul—possessed by an Irishman of course—has said: “No one cares for Limerick now. Of all the fierce possessors who fought for her when she was young, the local government officially alone remains, like the gray elderly husband of some housewifely woman who was a beauty and a ‘toast,’ and made men’s swords leap from their scabbards for love of her—once.”

At the mouth of the Shannon, near where its tidal waters meet the sea, Limerick has its “fashionable watering-place” of the conventional pattern. The chief “amusement” of this delectable place appears to be the gathering of “Irish moss,” as it is commonly known. Here they call it “Carrageen moss,” but it is the same thing, and ultimately turns {101}

LIMERICK CASTLE.

up as a dainty and nourishing jelly. The peasantry gather it for profit, the visitors for pastime. It is found in {103} many shallow rock pools at low tide, and grows in short, bushy tufts, coralline in shape. The “moss” must be bleached in the sun, and then boiled down into jelly. “Dulse,” another variety of edible seaweed, which requires no preparation, is also found here; and the central ribs of young oarweed are peeled and eaten like celery, which they very much resemble in looks, but—most emphatically—not in taste.

Dear also, to Americans, will be the memory of County Limerick as the birthplace of Fitz-James O’Brien.

The son of an attorney, he was born in 1828, receiving his education at Dublin University. In his youth he saw service as a British soldier, but early drifted toward journalism and America.

Among his earliest compositions were two remarkable poems, “Loch Ine” and “Irish Castles,” which present in a picturesque vocabulary many of the salient charms and beauties of his native isle. {104}

CHAPTER V.

THE SHANNON AND ITS LAKES

NO river in Great Britain, neither the Thames, nor the Clyde, nor even the Severn, equals the river Shannon and its lakes, either in length or in importance as an inland waterway. The native on its banks tells you that it rivals the Mississippi; but in what respect, Americans, at least, will wonder. Except that it broadens to perhaps a dozen miles in the widest of its lakes, there is, of course, no comparison whatever. The traffic on the river is of no great magnitude compared with that on the Thames and the Clyde; but, were there a demand for such, its capacity would be far greater than either.

Moreover, for beauty, either of the dainty and popularly picturesque sort, or of the supremely grand, it has preëminence, and one can journey its whole length, from Killaloe, {105}

THE SHANNON AND ITS LAKES

practically a suburb of Limerick, to Carrick-on-Shannon, something over a hundred miles, in steamboats of really comfortable, if not exactly luxurious, appointments. {106}

It is the tourist traffic mostly that is catered for; and the traveller, in the season, is likely to find the company mixed, though by no means is it of the “tripper” class.

The itinerary comprehends much that is beautiful and much that is historic.

From Limerick, one usually makes his way by train, although he may go by car or coach,—such a trip is well worth while,—and embarks upon the tiny steamer at Killaloe.

Here, at the lower end of Lough Derg, near Killaloe, stood in the ninth century Brian Boru’s palace of Kincora. The mound on which it was built is all that remains of a place that displayed, twelve hundred years ago, the greatest glory of the proud Irish kings.

Many were the events of historical moment which took place here, though, as a palace of great splendour and magnitude, it may have been exceeded by Tara and Emania.

The memory of Brian Boru’s life here {107}

KINCORA.

places him in the annals of the world’s great rulers as “every inch a king.” {109}

Neither on the Irish throne, nor on that of any other kingdom, did there ever sit a sovereign more splendidly qualified to rule; and Ireland had not for some centuries known such a glorious and prosperous, peaceful, and happy time as the five years preceding Brian’s death. He caused his authority to be not only

unquestioned, but obeyed and respected in every corner of the land. So justly were the laws administered in his name, and so loyally obeyed throughout the kingdom, that the bards relate a rather fanciful story of a young and exquisitely beautiful lady, who made, without the slightest apprehension of violence or insult, and in perfect safety, a tour of the island on foot, alone and unprotected, though bearing about her the most costly jewels and ornaments of gold. This legend will be further recalled by the memory of the well-known verses beginning “Rich and rare were the gems she wore.”

It was at Kincora that the following incident took place:

Mælmurra, Prince of Leinster, playing or advising on a game of chess, made or recommended a false move, upon which the patriotic Morrogh, son of Brian, observed that it was no wonder Mælmurra’s friends, the Danes (to whom he owed his elevation), were beaten at Glenmana, if he gave them advice like that. Mælmurra, highly incensed by the allusion,—all the more severe for its bitter truth,—arose, ordered his horse, and rode away in haste. Brian, when he heard it, despatched a messenger after the indignant guest, begging him to return; but Mælmurra was not to be pacified, and refused, and concerted and connived with certain Danish agents, always open to such negotiations, those measures which led to the great invasion of the year 1014, in which the whole Scandinavian race, from Anglesea and Man, north to Norway, bore an active part. {110}

While Brian was residing at Kincora, news was brought of his noble-hearted brother’s death, whereupon he was seized with the most violent grief. Brian’s favourite harp—always a legendary and traditional symbol of Irish emotions—was taken down, and he sang that famous death-song of Mahon, {111}

{112}

{113}

AN IRISH PIPER.

recounting all the glorious actions of his life. “His anger flashed out through his tears as he wildly chanted the noble lines,” say the chronicles.

“My heart shall burst within my breast,
Unless I avenge this great king.
They shall forfeit life for this foul deed,
Or I must perish by a violent death.”

Of the passionate attachment of the Irish for music, little need be said, as this is one of the national characteristics which has been at all times most strongly marked, and is still most widely appreciated, the harp being universally held as a national emblem of Ireland. Even in the prechristian period that we are here reviewing, music was an institution and a power in Erin.

Few spots in Ireland are richer in historical and archæological interest than Killaloe. There is a fine specimen of sixth-century architecture in the well-preserved cell of St. Lua, with its steep roof of stone and cunningly devised arches. It is a venerable building, and nestles under the shadow of the present Protestant cathedral, built by O’Brien, King of Thomond, in the twelfth century. On a small island in the river Shannon are the ruins of an ancient friary, and at a little distance the remains of a small chapel. These are said to mark the position of a ford used by pilgrims who came to visit Killaloe before the bridge, which is itself ancient, was built. {114}

Lough Derg is reputedly one of the prettiest pieces of water in Ireland. Its shores are well wooded, and the background all around is made up of swelling upland, dotted here and there with the white houses of the peasantry, while in the far distance are the heather-clad hills of the Counties Clare, Galway, and Tipperary.

In Lough Derg, on Station Island, is the reputed entrance to St. Patrick’s Purgatory. A wide-spread superstition accounts for its popularity, but whether as a purely “tourist point” or as a place of pilgrimage for penitents, it were better not to attempt to judge.

Tradition has it that St. Patrick had prevailed on God to place the entrance to purgatory in Ireland, that the unbelievers might the more readily be convinced of the immortality of the soul and of the sufferings that awaited the wicked after death. A few monks, according to Boate, an old Irish writer, dwelt near the cavern that formed the entrance. “Whoever came to the island with the intention of descending into the cavern and examining its wonders had to prepare himself by long vigils, fasts, and prayers, to strengthen him, as we are {115}

told, for his dangerous expedition; but, in reality, by reducing his bodily strength to make his imagination more ready to receive the impressions which it was thought desirable to leave upon his mind. He was then let down into the cavern, whence, after an interval of several hours, he was drawn up again half-dead, and, when he recovered his senses, mingling the wild dreams of his own imagination with what the monks told him, he seldom failed to tell the most marvellous tales of the place for the remainder of his life. It was not till the reign of James II. that the monks were driven away from the place, and the mystery of the dark cavern dissolved."

From Killaloe to Portumna, the Shannon flows through Lough Derg, a wide-spread waterway, an elaborate expansion of the river itself. This lake, which is twenty-five miles long and from two to six miles in breadth, has an average depth of about fifty feet. Close to Portumna is the Castle of Ballynasheera, said to have been once the residence of Ireton, Oliver Cromwell's son-in-law. {116}

From Ben Hill, a few miles below Portumna, near Woodford, is a splendid view of Lough Derg and the surrounding country. The lake here stretches along between the Slieve Aughty Mountains on the Connaught side and the Arra Mountains on the Munster side, whose lofty summits tower up high into the clouds. The shores, sloping gradually down to the water, are covered with luxurious foliage, through openings in which may be seen the ruins of many an ancient castle and once stately mansion.

Portumna itself is a flourishing town, but of no great antiquarian interest. The population of town and district is about two thousand.

Near by is Victoria Lock, Melleek, adjacent to which are two strongly built towers, which formerly mounted eight guns, and which, in more romantic times, were erected to guard the pass of the Shannon between Connaught and Leinster.

{118}

The Stone of the Divisions, Westmeath

Shannon Harbour, at which the Grand Canal joins the Shannon, is situated on the river about six or seven miles from Shannon Bridge, and is immortalized by Charles Lever in "Jack Hinton." {119}

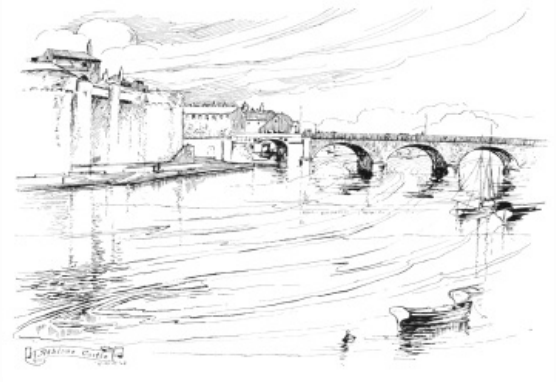
As a tourist resort the town appears to have degenerated sadly, a pretentious hotel establishment having been converted over into barracks for the constabulary.

From Shannon Harbour the steamer passes Shannon Bridge, and in due course reaches Athlone at the lower end of Lough Ree. "Population, seven thousand. Industry, manufacture of the celebrated woollen tweeds, which provides employment for several hundred operators, both male and female; there are various other smaller manufacturing industries pursued by the town population. In the rural districts, cattle rearing, both in Westmeath and Roscommon, and the pursuit of general agriculture is principally followed, and the inhabitants of these rural districts are generally comfortable and fairly well-to-do." Such is the usual guide-book information concerning Athlone, which lies at the juncture of Roscommon and Westmeath. {120}

As a matter of fact, however, almost every stone in the prosperous little city has a historic interest and value, from the ruins of its former splendid ecclesiastical establishments to its old houses and still more ancient fortifications, and the castle erected in 1215 by King John,—a counterpart in every respect of a similar establishment at Limerick. Queen Elizabeth made Athlone the capital of Connaught. After the battle of the Boyne, it underwent two sieges from the forces of King William. Some traces of the old fortifications may be seen, and the castle is still in perfect repair.

Just north of Athlone, where the Shannon joins Lough Ree, is Auburn, more popularly known as "Sweet Auburn," whose old ruined parsonage is famous as the early home of Oliver Goldsmith.

Fleeting time has changed this modest mansion—whose ruin was deplored by Goldsmith himself—but little. It stands about a hundred yards from the public road at the end of a straight avenue bordered with ash-trees,—a plain rectangular, two-storied house, built in the ugly and uncompromising style that {121}



ATHLONE CASTLE.

was popular in Ireland in the early part of the seventeenth century. The roof is off, but the walls remain, and {123} seem still to be haunted by the shade of the Rev. Charles Goldsmith, the original Doctor Primrose in "The Vicar of Wakefield," while his wife, hospitable as of yore, still seems to invite the passing stranger to taste her gooseberry wine. The famous inn,—since rebuilt out of all resemblance to its former self,—immortalized by Goldsmith, and known as the Three Pigeons, where were drawn the "inspired nut-brown draughts," and "where village statesmen talked with looks profound," is but a little distance from the house. The country all around Lishoy—for that is the name of the townland in which Toberclare, this Mecca of the Goldsmith student, is situated—is well wooded and cultivated. The drive from Athlone to "Sweet Auburn" is one of the most delightful in Ireland. As the reputed *locale* of "The Deserted Village," Auburn, or Lishoy, as it was formerly known, has an unusual share of interest for the literary pilgrim.

Goldsmith was not *born* at Lishoy, as is sometimes stated, but in Pallas, a village in the County Longford, {124} his father being at the time a poor curate and farmer. The infancy of Oliver was, however, spent in Lishoy, and there is little doubt but that the scenes of his childhood became afterward the imaginative sources whence he drew the picture of "Sweet Auburn," though it is doubtless true that the descriptions are general enough in character to apply to many localities in England as well as Ireland:

"Sweet Auburn! loveliest village of the plain,
Where health and plenty cheer'd the labouring swain;
Where smiling spring its earliest visits paid,
And parting summer's lingering blooms delay'd.
Dear lovely bowers of innocence and ease,
Seats of my youth, when every sport could please;
How often have I loitered o'er thy green,
Where humble happiness endear'd each scene!
How often have I paused on every charm!
The shelter'd cot, the cultivated farm:
The never-failing brook, the busy mill;
The decent church that topp'd the neighbouring hill;
The hawthorn bush, with seats beneath the shade,
For talking age, and whispering lovers made."

Attempts have been made from time to time to justify the procedure, which is customary here, of {125} stripping the hawthorn of its blossoms to sell to tourists; and to explain that it is a perfectly legitimate and artistic thing to have hung the old broken plates and cups of the erstwhile Three Pigeons on the walls of the new inn. Sir Walter Scott attempted to justify all this as "a pleasing tribute to the poet," but there is a hollow mockery about it all that will make the true pilgrim hasten to commune with

"The never-failing brook, the busy mill;"

and

"The decent church that topp'd the neighbouring hill,"

all three of which exist to-day, and bear a far greater likeness to the description of the poet than does the reputed inn.

Through Lough Ree one journeys along historical ground. Rindown Castle was built, it is said, by Turgesius, a Dane, who made of it an impregnable stronghold, as may be readily believed when one views its rocky promontory.

The island of Inchcleraun, commonly called "Quaker Island," is associated with early Celtic Christianity, {126} and has on it the remains of six churches. On this island, Queen Meave is said to have been killed, while bathing, by an Ulster chieftain, who threw a stone from a sling while standing on the shore.

Knockcroghery Bay leads to Roscommon, the chief town of the county of the same name. It had its origin at the time when St. Coman founded a monastery there, and to-day may still be seen elaborate remains of a former Dominican establishment of the thirteenth century, and of a fortified castle of the same era.

At the head of the eastern arm is All Saints' Island, on which are the well-preserved remains of a church and monastery,—an ancient foundation which, in the seventeenth century, was occupied by the nunnery of the Poor Clares, but was burnt by the soldiery in 1642. It is recorded that the peasants of Kilkenny West retaliated by killing the destroyers.

Inchbonin, the “Island of the White Cow,” contains the remains of a church and monastery, the foundation of the religious house being attributed to St. Rioch, a nephew of St. Patrick. Here, also, are the remains of several Celtic crosses. {127}

Entering the Shannon proper again at Lanesborough, one finally reaches Carrick-on-Shannon, in itself uninteresting enough, but a centre from which a vast amount of profitable knowledge may be obtained. It is the gateway of the pretty valley of the river Boyle, where stands the pleasant little town of the same name, with its famous abbey, which is in rather a better state of preservation than many “chronicles in stone.” The choir, nave, and transepts are all in existence, and show, in their construction, all the elements of the West Norman and Gothic work of their time. The nave, with its hundred and thirty-five semicircular arches, which separate it from its aisles, is perhaps the best and most characteristic Norman feature, if we except the square heavy tower. In 1235, the English sacked these sacred precincts, and even—it is said—stripped the monks of their gowns. In 1595 it was turned into a fortress and besieged by the army of the Earl of Tyrone.

From the “Hibernia Illustrata” we learn that, “In the cemetery of Kilbronan, not far from Boyle, was buried the famous Carolan, one of the last of the veritable Irish bards; and here for several years the skull that had ‘once been the seat of so much verse and music,’ was placed in the niche of the old church, decorated, not with laurel, but with a black ribbon. He died in the neighbourhood in the year 1741, at a very advanced age, notwithstanding that he had been in a state of intoxication during probably seven-eighths of his life.” {128}

From this we may infer that, if liquor was not more potent in those days, it was at least less expensive. {129}

CHAPTER VI.

GALWAY AND ITS BAY

IT may not be recognized, it certainly is not a widely known fact, that Galway at one time—however extraordinary it may now appear—arrived at a pitch of mercantile greatness superior, with the single exception of London, to any port in what is now known as the British Isles.

From an original letter from Henry Cromwell and the Irish Privy Council, dated Galway, 7th April, 1657, we learn that:

"For situation, voisenage, and commerce it hath with Spain, the Strayts, West Indies, and other parts, noe towne or port in the three nations (London excepted) was more considerable."

"Another city so ancient as Galway does not exist in Ireland," says an old-time traveller. {130}

"Its situation is flat and unpicturesque, but the universality of red petticoats, and the same brilliant colour in most other articles of female dress, gives a foreign aspect to the population, which prepares you somewhat for the completely Italian or Spanish look of most of the streets of the town." "In Galway," writes Köhl, "the metropolis of the west, and a Hesperian colony, he (the traveller) will find a quaint and peculiar city, with antiquities such as he will meet with nowhere else. The old town is throughout of Spanish architecture, with wide gateways, broad stairs, and all the fantastic ornaments calculated to carry the imagination back to Granada and Valencia. Then the town, with its monks, churches, and convents, has a completely Catholic air; and the population of the adjoining country have preserved something of their picturesque national costume."

From the earliest times, especially about the fourteenth century, and until a later period, extensive trade was carried on betwixt Spain and Ireland. Galway was always one of the principal ports frequented by foreigners. The richer merchants of the town made periodical visits to Spain, and returned with Spanish {131} luxuries and Spanish ideas. The result of this was that mansions in Spanish style arose and were filled with Spanish furniture; while the ladies used in their dresses the bright colours and light textures of Spain. It is reasonable, too, to suppose that in many instances Spanish servants, seamen, and even workmen, formed alliances with the natives of the soil, and thus the population became, not only in dress but in blood, allied to their foreign visitors. Many of the houses built for the merchant princes of Galway still remain, though in a dilapidated state, and have come to be occupied by the poorest inhabitants. Truly, "Galway was a famous town when its Spanish merchants were princes; but their fine dwellings were at one time usurped and defaced by the rabble, and little remains of the interiors to show their ancient glory." It is probable that, besides the Spaniards, the Italians also traded with Galway, and that banks were instituted by Jews from Lombardy. Little more than fifty years ago, "the tribes of Galway" claimed to themselves the exclusive right of exercising certain civil privileges. {132}

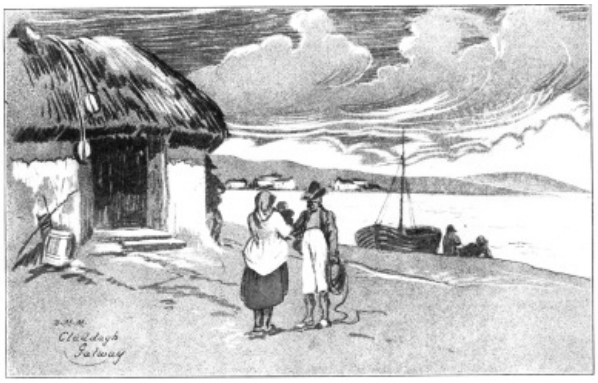
Just how far one may go in promulgating a theory, in a book such as this, remains an open question. With regard to the Spaniards in Ireland, it is not so much conjecture as to the time of their advent, or their numbers, as it is with the causes which led up to it. Galway was one day to be the pride and hope of Erin's Isle. This we all know and recognize, and, with this end in view, huge warehouses and quays were built to accommodate a vast ocean-borne traffic which was to come and make it the rival of Liverpool. One may walk along these quays to-day and see the ruin of all this enterprise, for Galway, despite its seventeen thousand inhabitants, is a town which bears, in its every aspect, the appearance of a place that has already sunk into irretrievable decay.

As a gateway to Connemara, Galway still exercises great influence on the prosperity of the west of Ireland, and, moreover, has an historic interest which cannot fail to be attractive to the tourist for all time to come. Recalling how James Lynch FitzStephen, in 1493, condemned and actually executed with his own hands his only son Walter, who had murdered a young Spaniard, brings us to the fact that Galway was at one {133} time more a city of Spain than of Ireland.

In ancient times Galway was the most famous port in Ireland, and had a very extensive trade, especially with the ports of Hispaniola. Many Spanish merchants, sailors, and fishermen settled here, until, at one time, probably one-fourth of the population of the town was pure Spanish. They built their houses after the Spanish pattern, and mingled with the native Irish population; but not, however, without leaving upon it the ineradicable mark and powerful impress of their own character, and imparting the superstition, the temperament, and the physical qualities of their race.

Moreover, it is said that a large portion of the famed Armada was wrecked off the Galway coast; and that, in addition to those already there, these survivors settled and multiplied. In consequence, much of the ancient architecture—discernible even to-day—is obviously of Spanish origin; and there is no doubt that the Spaniards have left their impress on the features and character of the inhabitants of the town and the near-by {134} districts. One notes this as he strolls through the market, where the women are selling fish, for the most part consisting of sea-bream, red mullet, conger-eels, and lobsters. In their complexions, their dark hair and eyes, their high cheek-bones, and their carriage,—in the *mantilla*-like way in which they wear their shawls, and in the brilliant colours of their costumes,—they bear a striking resemblance to the fisherwomen of Cadiz and Malaga. The men are even more strikingly Spanish.

The speech is curious, too. It is Gaelic, but it is full of Spanish idioms and terminations. These people live for the most part in a village called the Claddagh, whose population formerly kept itself quite distinct from its Irish neighbours. The people married only among themselves; had their own religion; in a measure, their own municipal government; and pursued their own way without any reference to what went on around them. Of late, however, this exclusiveness has, to a large extent, been broken down. Still the Claddagh is a spot which has no parallel elsewhere {135}



CHADDAGH.

in Ireland, and is a distinct survival of the original Spanish settlement. {137}

The Galway fisheries are still, and always have been, an important economic factor in the life of these parts. Their conduct is a feature no less interesting in many ways than the more æsthetic aspects of the region. Nowhere else in the island can such a sight be seen as in the salmon season may be observed from Galway Bridge, when the water in the river is low. One looks over the bridge into the water, and sees what is apparently the dark bed of the river; but drop in a pebble, and instantly there is a splash and a flash of silver, and a general movement along the whole bed of the stream. Then one comes to know that what apparently were closely packed stones are salmon, squeezed together like herrings in a barrel, unable to get up-stream for want of water.

This salmon fishery, together with the fisheries on the coast, constitute the staple industries of the district; and, as a business proposition, might appeal largely to some company promoter were he able to corner the supply and control the traffic. The hardihood of the population, their aptitude for seamanship, {138} their industrious habits, and their thrifty instincts make them so capable of rising to any opportunities that may be offered to them, that there is no reason why Galway should not become as great a fishing-port as any on the east coast of England.

Galway is full of memorials of its ancient days of commercial greatness, when wealthy merchant families inhabited the fine stone mansions now fallen into ruins; and tales of former glories are on everybody’s lips. There is no dearth of anecdote about Galway. Some of it is fact; much of it doubtless is not; but there seems no reason why one could not expand a short chapter of its history into a great book were he so inclined.

Galway was practically “discovered” by the English in the thirteenth century, “when they took possession of the desirable little town,” and portioned it out among thirteen English families—those of Athy, Blake, Bodkin, Browne, Deane, D’Arcy, Lynch, Joyce, Kirwan, Martin, Morris, Skerret, and French. These became known as the Tribes of Galway, and before long became “more Irish than the Irish themselves.” This we learn {139} from the written records; but, since they exist so completely and lucidly, there seems no reason to quarrel with the statement.

The Lynches were, and are, the most numerous and important of the Tribes of Galway. The name is said to be aboriginal or at least Celtic, and again tradition has it that all the Lynches are descended from the daughter and heiress of a certain lord marshal of the county of Galway in the year 1280. In 1442 a certain Edmond Lynch FitzThomas built at his own expense a bridge called the West Bridge, and twenty years later another, Gorman Lynch, held a patent for coining money; and yet another, James Lynch FitzStephen, the famous Warden of Galway, whose notoriety has been described in Dutton’s “Survey of Galway” (1824), lived at the end of the same century.

As described by Dutton, the “notorious” incident arose from Lynch FitzStephen having sent his only son to Spain on some commercial affairs, who, returning with the son of his father’s Spanish friend and a valuable cargo, conspired with the crew to murder and throw him overboard, and convert the property to their own {140} use. One of the party, as providentially happens in most such cases, revealed the horrid transaction to the mayor. He tried and condemned his son to death, and appointed a day for his execution. It was imagined by his relatives that, through their intercession, and the consideration of his being an only son, he would not proceed to put the sentence into execution. He told them to come to him on a certain day, and they should have his determination. Early on the day appointed, they found the son hanging out of one of the windows of his father’s house. It was commemorated by the cross-bones in Lombard Street.

Further records have it that the stone bearing the cross-bones was not put up for many years after the transaction, when it was erected on the wall of St. Nicholas’s churchyard, and bore the inscription:

1524
Remember Death.
All is vanity of vanities.

{142}

Judge Lynch's House, Galway

From this incident—a recorded fact of history be it remembered—the familiar "Americanism" (*sic*) of "lynch-law" probably received its derivation. At any rate, the circumstance is one of significance and plausibility, or it shows once again how the seed of coincidence takes root and thrives many thousands of miles from the land of its first growth. {143}

Galway has ever been an important commercial centre, and rightly enough points out the fact that to be as proud and honest as a Galway merchant is to be reckoned as one of the upright of this world. It is a curious fact that, notwithstanding the maritime resources of Galway, salt was one of the commodities imported to it from Spain, and so highly was the import prized that John French, who was mayor in 1538, bore the distinguishing appellation of *Shane ne Sallin*.

The county of Galway must have been a quarrelsome and belligerent community in times past, judging from the fact that local history gives elaborate accounts of certain fighting gentlemen known as "Blue-Blaze-Devil-Bob," "Nineteen-Duel-Dick," "Hair-Trigger-Pat," and "Feather-Spring-Ned." But these honourable cognomens are no longer cited with a voice of triumph by the leading citizens; and it may be presumed that Hair-Trigger and Blaze-Devil exploits are becoming rarer. There is no reason to doubt but that this is so, judging from appearances and experiences with which one comes in contact to-day. {144}

Historians, anthropologists, and antiquarians have attempted before now to draw comparisons between the inhabitants of Galway and those of Spain. The circumstance has been authenticated and remarked frequently; but it is interesting, if not valuable, to have a native first-hand opinion on the subject.

An elderly gentleman whom the author once met, who had lived in Spain and Galway respectively a number of years, remarked many characteristics in common among the middle class; and, again, at the proceedings of a philosophical society, it was stated that "in the lower and more vulgar classes, the old Milesian habits still prevail." Rather a contemptuous way of putting it this, but indolence, or at least something more than a trace of it, *is*, one must admit, still apparent in both places. {145}

Of the spoken speech of Galway much has been written, and with good excuse, for Spanish idioms and words still come to the surface here, as does the French tongue in certain parts of Scotland.

The writer recalls an incident in the experiences of an ardent automobilist, which took place in the neighbourhood of Galway:

He was driving down an extremely steep hill, and was barely able to keep the automobile in hand. There was a safe "run-down" ahead, but a number of Irish-speaking children kept dancing and running around in front, deaf to his uncomprehended cries of "Get away! Take care! you'll be run over!" and it seemed likely that some one would be killed when the motor-car *should* get its head. Just as that disaster became imminent, however, the driver remembered the one Irish word he understood,—"Faugh-a-ballagh!" (a famous war-cry of olden times, equivalent to "Clear the way"). He only remembered it as the name of a race-horse, but yelled it out; and the children sprang out of his way like arrows, just in time to let the car rush safely past. {146}

Galway, too, has the reputation of being one of the few counties left (Cork is another) where the typical "Paddy" of romance is to be found. That is, so far as his or her dress is concerned; and, truth to tell, it has all but disappeared from here, for it is only of a bright summer Sunday, or some local feast-day, that the Irishman, dressed as in the chorus of a comic opera, is ever seen.

In Galway itself, on an important market-day, he is still to be seen, and forms a picturesque note to the surroundings which the sentimentalist would indeed otherwise miss. He is found in knee-breeches and tail coat, high *caubeen* with a pipe stuck in it, and long home-knit stockings, accompanied by the Galway women in short scarlet petticoat and close-hooded cloak. *All* the latter wear this dress, by the way. There is practically not a woman of the working class in the town—certainly not one in the Claddagh fishing quarter—who does not cling to this bit of colour, as thick as a blanket and very fleecy. It is spun, woven, and made at home; and, as a result, raggedness is exceedingly infrequent among the Galway natives. Indeed, all Connemara is remarkable for the clean, neat, and whole clothing of its people, who are otherwise poverty-stricken. It is only in great towns, where the poor clothe themselves in slop-shop stuffs and cast-off garments {147}

of the upper classes, that they are ragged and unkempt. Homespuns and tweeds, such as we are accustomed to see only in smart coat and skirt costumes, or expensive shooting suits, are the daily wear of every one. They cost little,—only the keep of a few hardy mountain sheep, from which the wool is obtained, the loan of a spinning-wheel from a neighbour, and the small fee of a local hand-loom weaver. Thus the people of Mayo and Galway, though often at other times miserably clad, go about with a neat "tailor-made" aspect that is astonishing.

The tourists, *i. e.*, the ladies, buy the charming Claddagh cloaks and bolts of homespun, which ultimately appear in more fashionable centres as the last thing in the world of fashion.

{148} Another form of souvenir, which appears to be irresistible, is the peculiar marriage-ring of Claddagh. This particular pattern has been the marriage-ring of the Claddagh fishing tribes for many centuries. Indeed, every peasant matron in the county wears one. The design is that of a heart over two clasped hands, surmounted by a crown, the signification being "Love and friendship reign." Among the upper classes in Ireland, these rings are often used as guards for engagement and wedding rings.

A more interesting monument than any memorial stone in the abbey, or, indeed, in Sligo, is Misgoun Meave, which dominates the whole neighbourhood, the traditional burial-place of Queen Meave. On the top of Knocknarea, a hill over one thousand feet high, stands an immense cairn of stones, almost like a second peak to the hill. Here, overlooking a wide range of beautiful seacoast and country, tradition states that the famous Irish Queen of Connaught, after she had buried three husbands, chose her tomb. Nearly two thousand years have passed since the date popularly assigned to her reign, but there can be no reasonable doubt that she was a thoroughly genuine personality, and left her individual mark upon the history of her time. Like {149} Boadicea, she led her own armies in person, and seems, according to the wild legends told of her exploits, to have been an Amazon of terrible reputation and dauntless courage. She had the red-gold hair that may still be seen in Connaught,—a heritage popularly supposed to have descended from her,—and wore it flowing like a mantle over her. Her beauty was considerable, her temper ungovernable, and her virtue, apparently, doubtful. She was often accompanied to battle by her stalwart sons of middle age; and her own years are reported to have counted well over a century before death at last loosened her iron grip on blood-stained Connaught. One can well understand how such a woman, dying, chose to be buried where, even in death, her sightless eyes might look down upon the land of lake and island, forest, hill, and sea that had been hers so long.

A lively French writer, who travelled in Ireland in the early part of the nineteenth century, was evidently much smitten with the fair sex.

He says, in part: {150}

"The greatest gaiety reigns there,—in fact, the belles of Galway are capable of instructing most French young ladies in the art of coquetry. In the early morning, one sees five or six young ladies, perched upon a jaunting-car, go two miles from the city to refresh their charms by a sea bath, and in the afternoon, if there be no assembly, they go from shop to shop, buying, laughing, and chatting with their friends. There are many in this city who grow old without knowing it."

All of which seems a simple and innocuous enough amusement. In spite of which, however, no very apparent coquettishness on the part of Galway young ladies is to be noted to-day,—at least, it has not been observed by the writer of this book. Perhaps that merely points to a lack of susceptibility on his part.

T. P. O'Connor once told the story of a travelling showman who brought to Galway from America a panorama of America. "He knew what he was about," said Mr. O'Connor, "when he declared that Chesapeake Bay was the finest bay in the world with two exceptions,—the Bay of Naples and the Bay of Galway; and he {151} was very loudly cheered.

"Without exaggeration, it is a beautiful bay, almost landlocked, with mountains—small enough in comparison with others, but to the untravelled eye of the Irish villager solemn and imposing as the Matterhorn—bounding it on the far side, and with a somewhat narrow mouth opening out into the Atlantic. A mouth that, under the light of morning or evening, is something to suggest either the vastness of this world of human beings, or the anticipation of the greater vastness of that other world beyond, which haunted the imaginations and thoughts of the pious Catholics of that region."

These few lines serve to give a most truthful word-picture of Galway Bay; and also a glimpse of the brilliancy with which Mr. O'Connor writes. Continuing, Mr. O'Connor writes of his school-days in Ireland thus, in words which give a far more sympathetic and clear knowledge of things as they are—or were—than most reminiscences of a like nature:

"There had come to my native town of Athlone a new school, and it was but natural that my father should {152} like me to go there, and, accordingly, I had no more of Galway—except at vacation-time—for five long years.

"These years belong to my native town and the school near it; and they were among the most unhappy years of my life.

"I remember still the bitter flood of tears I wept the first day after I returned to Athlone from the year or so I had spent in Galway.

"But Galway had to me, then, many of the chief charms of boyhood. There was a second house behind that in which we lived, which was usually unoccupied. From its roof you could see one of those beautiful scenes that, once seen, haunt one ever afterward. Beyond the town you could catch sight of the sea; and there, on certain evenings, you saw the fleet of herring-boats as they went out for their night-watch and night harvest of fish,—a sight that was more like something of fairy-land than of reality, though I dare say the poor crews found much grimmer reality than romance in their hard and laborious night-watches."

{153} Just off the mouth of Galway Bay are the Aran Islands. Between them and the mainland the sea is often so rough as to make it impossible for small boats to undertake the crossing. The principal food of the inhabitants is dried fish, naturally a home product.

The chief patron saint of Munster, aside from St. Finbarr's association with Cork, was St. Albeus. He had already been converted by certain Christianized Britons, and had travelled to Rome before the arrival of St. Patrick among the Irish. After his return, he became the disciple and fellow labourer of that great apostle,

and was ordained by him as first Archbishop of Munster, with his see fixed at Emely, long since removed to Cashel.

He possessed, according to the chroniclers, the wonderful art of making men, not only Christians, but saints, and for this great ability King Engus bestowed upon him the isles of Aran in Connaught, where he founded a great monastery.

So famous did the island become for the sanctity of its people that it was long called “Aran of Saints.”

The rule which St. Albeus drew up for them is still extant in the old Irish manuscripts. Though zeal for the divine honour and charity for the souls of others fixed him in the world, he was always careful, by habitual recollection and frequent retreats, to nourish in his own soul the pure love of heavenly things, and to live always in a very familiar and intimate acquaintance with himself and in the daily habitual practice of the most perfect virtues. In his old age, it was his earnest desire to commit to others the care of his dear flock, that he might be allowed to prepare himself in the exercise of holy solitude for his great change. For this purpose, he begged that he might be suffered to retire to Thule, the remotest country toward the northern pole that was known to the ancients, which seems to have been Shetland, or, according to some, Iceland or some part of Greenland; but the king guarded the ports to prevent his flight, and the saint died amidst the labours of his charge in 525, according to the Ulster and Innisfallen annals. {154}

These islands are three in number: Inishmore, Imishmaan, and Inisheer, and contain among them such a wealth of pagan and Christian antiquities as is excelled by no {155}

THE CHURCH OF THE CANONS, ARAN.

locality in Ireland of the same area: perhaps fifteen square miles in all. {157}

There is a work published in Dublin, known as “The Illustrated Programme of the Society of Architects,” which contains a brief account of the wealth of the architectural and historical lore of these parts. More one could not wish to know unless he were profoundly interested, and less would not even satisfy him if he became at all enamoured of these islands, so full of dreary old places and quaint customs, to say nothing of the wealth of tradition and legend which hangs about it all.

Westward, the nearest land is America, where so many stalwart sons of Galway—and daughters, too—have migrated. Here the peasants still reverently believe in the far-famed land of Hy or O,—Brazil, the paradise of the ancient pagan Irish.

The praises of the “great fictitious island” were sung by the bards of olden time, and tradition has perpetuated its fame as a “land of perpetual sunshine, abounding in rivers, forests, mountains, and lakes. Castles and palaces arise on every side, and, as far as the eye can reach, it is covered with groves, bowers, and silent glades; its fields are ever green, with sleek cattle grazing upon them; its groves filled with myriads of birds. It is only seen occasionally, owing to the long enchantment, which will, they say, now soon be dissolved. The inhabitants seem always young, taking no heed of time, and lead lives of perfect happiness. In many respects this fabulous land resembles the Tirna-n’oge, the pagan Irish Elysium.” {158}

Among the chief—and assuredly unique—reliques of these few square miles of *terra firma* are the ruins of the old fortified Castle of Ardkyne, in which are built the remains of the great church of St. Enna, chief of the Oriels, who, upon his conversion, abandoned his secular rule, and eventually settled (not later than A. D. 489) in Aran, which henceforth became *Ara-na-noamh*, “Aran of the Saints.” The church was one of several destroyed by the soldiers of Cromwell; but its plan, about twenty by ten feet, can be traced behind the village. Above the village is the stump of a round tower, and, on the ridge, the oratory of St. Benen, a unique specimen of early Irish church architecture, which has remarkably steep pitched gables. The window in the east wall has its head and splay of a single stone. The narrow north doorway has inclined jambs. If the name refers to the apostle of Connaught, St. Benen of Armagh, it must be a dedication, as he died in 468. The building may with confidence be assigned to the sixth century. {159}

St. Edna’s burial-place, known as *Tegloch Edna*, is another curious premediæval church.

On the Aran Islands there are no bogs, but one has, instead, to dodge his footsteps in and out among pebbles and rolling stones of every size and shape. This is particularly so if one is to make the journey to Dun Ængus, one of the finest prehistoric forts of Western Europe; called, indeed, by Dr. Hindes Petrie, “The most magnificent barbaric monument now extant in Europe.”

It is, undoubtedly, the most noteworthy object in Aran. It consisted originally of a triple line of works, but the two inner lines, of horseshoe shape on the verge of a bold headland, are those best preserved. Tradition assigns it to Ængus, a Firbolg chief who lived about two thousand years ago. The *chevaux-de-frise* defending the second line is unmistakable, and the whole is as majestic in its grandeur as its supposed antiquity might indicate. {160}

Temple MacDuagh, near Kilmurvy, is a “cyclopean” church of the seventh century, and Dun Oghil is a grand fort consisting of a circular cashel, within a second, which is roughly square.

These are the chief features of the great island, with the Temple Brecan, which has a chancel of rude ancient masonry, a choir which more nearly approaches our own time by four or five hundred years and is still modern, and a sacred enclosure devoted to the burial of saints, of which the Irish calendar seems quite full.

On Inisheer are the remains of an ancient place of worship dedicated to St. Cavan, brother to St. Kevin, the legend of whose life everywhere confronts one in County Wicklow. There is another to St. Gobnet, abbess of the sixth century. {161}

CHAPTER VII.

ACHILL TO SLIGO

IT has been suggested before now that the domain of Achill Island, off the coast of Mayo, that wonderland of natural unspoiled grandeur, be preserved as a sort of national park.

Its primitive beauties are impressively great without rising to splendour or magnificence.

Said Sir Harry Johnston, in writing to the *London Times*:

"Is it impossible that individuals and the State together should intervene before it is too late and save Achill Island as a national park, as a paradise in which the last aspects of the indigenous British fauna may be exhibited? This might be done without disturbing the indigenous population, who could still carry on their fishing industry and the amount of agriculture necessary to their subsistence, without interfering unduly with {162} the wild birds and beasts of the island. There would be, of course, an absolute interdict against 'sportsmen' and gunners; it would no longer be permissible to shoot the seals that haunt the caves and rocks around Achill, while the deer, wild goats, foxes, eagles, ravens, swans, gulls, choughs, and other wild birds and beasts would be similarly protected. People would then visit Achill Island at all seasons of the year (the climate is remarkably mild in winter) for the pleasure and interest afforded by the contemplation of its wild fauna. We should, in short, have an object-lesson of what Ireland and most other parts of the British Isles were like under prehistoric conditions."

From this it will be inferred that there is every encouragement for such a procedure, did the powers but take their rightful initiative.

Whether such an event, if it come to pass, would make for a greater admiration of this lone and sea-girt bit of *terra firma*, it remains for others than the writer of this book to {163}

ACHILL ISLAND

prognosticate. Certainly, under any aspect except that of the erection of multitudinous "resort hotels" and {165} "furnished bungalows," Achill Island is a wonderful resort for those in need of soothing influences; and, for its natural and unspoiled charms alone, should be kept quite as it now is.

Achill is a veritable unknown wonderland. Not that it is actually unexplored, that it is vast, or that it is inaccessible. It is none of these; but few foreigners, or "aliens," as the Irish prefer to think of strangers, have ever visited this little-known corner of Ireland, or even know where it is. Achill Island is the largest island on the Irish coast, in shape not unlike an irregular triangle, and contains an area of fifty-five square miles. To the north is the deeply indented Black Sod Bay, with its myriad smaller bays, while to the south is Clew Bay, populated with numerous tiny islets, and the high-held head of Croagh Patrick. Off to the northwest are the "Enchanted Isles," the legendary homes of saints and recluses, among them Inishglora, Inishkeenah, and Inishkea.

On one of these it is fondly believed by the natives that Ossian resided. Tradition has preserved the {166} record thus:

"Ossine MacFoin, seated on the banks of the Shannon, adoring the Author of Nature in the contemplation of his works, was suddenly hurried away to Tirna-n'oge (the country of youth, or island of immortals), which he describes with all the vivacity that fancy, aided by the sight of so lovely a country as Ireland, could assist the bard with. He remained here for some days he thought, and, on his return, was greatly surprised to find no vestige of his house or of his acquaintance. In vain did he seek after his father Fion, and his Fonne Eirion; in vain sounds the buabhal, or well-known military clarion, to collect those intrepid warriors. Long since had these heroes been cut off in battle; long had his father ceased to live! Instead of a gallant race of mortals which he had left behind, he found a puny and degenerate people, scarce speaking the same language. In a word, it appeared that, instead of two days, he had remained near two centuries in this mansion of the blessed." (O'Halloran.)

Achill itself contains scarcely a tree worthy the dignity of the name; but heath, gorse, juniper, and coarse {167} grasses abound.

Sleivemore has a height of 2,204 feet and Croghan 2,192. Both rise abruptly from the sea, after the manner of the castellated peaks in the fairy books, which, with their component castles, mostly do not exist out of books.

Kildavnet Castle on Achill Sound was one of the numerous retreats of Grace O'Malley. Its square keep still stands. The arm of the sea on which it was built was so deep that vessels rode at low water under the

very walls of the castle. “Here,” tradition states, “the skull of Grace O’Malley was formerly preserved, and valued as a precious relic. One night, however,—so the legend goes,—the bones of the famous sea-queen were stolen from their resting-place, and conveyed, with those of thousands of her descendants, into Scotland, to be ground into fertilizer. The theft was of course perpetrated in secret, and in the night-time. If the crew had been seized by the peasantry, with their singular cargo, not a man of them would have lived to tell the tale, for the Irish regard with peculiar horror any desecration of the graveyard.” {168}

According to a recent census, the population of Achill and Achill-beg, the baby islet off the southern limb of its parent, has decreased nearly ten per cent. in the space of ten years; from which fact it may be inferred that the popularity of this salubrious spot—for it ranks high among the world’s great natural sanatoria—is not increasing with the rapidity that might be expected.

The two villages of the larger island, Keel and Dooagh, seem populous enough, as is also the Protestant community of Dugort. The island, in general, is exceedingly unproductive, though the sea yields a wonderful harvest to the fisher folk.

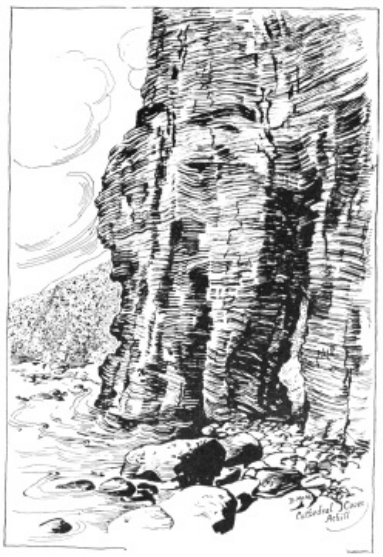
There is but a narrow margin between the well-being and distress of the inhabitants, but signs are not wanting that whatever, in exceptional periods, may have been their condition, at present they are relatively better off than many of their compatriots in the west of Ireland. Considerable numbers annually migrate to the north of England and the south of Scotland for the harvest, just as, with the same motive, the “East-Enders” of London throng to the hop-fields of Kent, and the willing and industrious Bretons cross the Channel, in the autumn, to the hay-fields of England’s “home counties.” {169}

Off the western Irish coast, from Connemara and Mayo, there are yet to be found remote islands with an exceedingly primitive civilization. Achill owes much of its interest to the fact that it exhibits a similar state of things, in many points little altered by contact with the mainland. The people, the cabins they inhabit, and their manner of life show very little change, in spite of the introduction of a good many articles of manufacture which a generation or two ago were quite unheard of. One thing which cannot fail to be noticed will be the queer little “public houses.” The tenement itself, however aboriginal, is sure to contain an assortment of strong drinks as varied as the average West End bar. The quality may be dubious, but there will be no question as to the strength and specific gravity of the spirit, particularly the *eau-de-vie*, or the “mountain dew.”

Of the charms of Dugort, the “Settlement,” and Dugort proper, the poet-laureate, in the pages of “Maga,” has written eulogistically. He says: {170}

“A more perfect place of holiday resort it would not be possible to imagine. There are fine yellow sands, where children may make dykes, fortresses, and mountains of moderate height.... There is fishing, either in smooth or rolling water, for those who love the indolent rocking or the rough rise and fall of the sea; precipitous and fretted cliffs, carved with the likeness of some time-eaten Gothic fane by the architectonic ocean; rides, drives, and walks amid the finest scenery of the kingdom. ‘I think she prefers Brighton,’ said a stranger to me of his companion; and, if one prefers Brighton, one knows where to go. But if nature, now majestically serene, now fierce and passionate, be more to you than bicyclettes and German bands, you can nowhere be better than at Achill.”

The Settlement, or modern Dugort, is a group of cabins above the shore, which owed its creation to the Rev. Edward Nangle, a clergyman of the Established Church. In 1831 he visited Achill, and was so impressed with what he deemed the “spiritual destitution” {171}



CATHEDRAL CAVES, ACHILL.

of the islanders that he organized a mission. Some seventy acres of land having been bought, two or three cottages were erected in 1833, and in the following year Mr. Nangle settled at what is now the bright little village of modern Dugort. Whatever opinion may be held as to the value or wisdom of his undertaking, Catholic and Protestant alike, now that the dust of the battle has settled, will agree that Mr. Nangle had in him the stuff that heroes are made of. His immediate oversight was withdrawn about 1852, though for the rest of his life he took an active share in promoting the continuance of his work. He died in 1883, in his eighty-fourth year, but long before that time the “mission” had ceased to be a cause of dispute, and now {173}

Dugort is merely a small Protestant preserve in a Catholic district.

Just south of Achill, in Clew Bay, is Clare Island, which has been likened to the pirate islands of the transformation scenes of the theatre. Certainly the description is a good one, as it is a spot typically suitable in shape and outline for hidden treasures, shipwrecks, and blood-letting galore. Its outline is bold and jagged, {174} and it sits ensconced in a basin of blue water, which, in the twilight, is lit up by the western sun in a manner like nothing else so much as that of the theatre.

It was perhaps merely an odd fancy—though a likely enough one—that is responsible for the *simile*; but it is pertinent to remark that this tiny emerald, set in a sea of sapphire, was really one of the many haunts of Grace O'Malley, the famous chieftainess and warring amazon of the sixteenth century. Here she actually did live, hoarded her arms and munitions, concealed her treasures, and imprisoned her captives, hence it is with reason that the description lives to-day. One commends the perspicacity of Grace O'Malley, or Grania Uaile, as she is sometimes called, in having selected such a beautiful spot for her stronghold, sheltered on one side by the purple hills of Connemara, and on the other guarded by the open sea.

Next to the headlands of Kerry, Connemara is the westernmost part of Ireland. Its identity is now lost in that of County Galway, but it is still known to travellers as "wild Connemara." Not that it is entirely unpeopled, or {175}

IN CONNEMARA.

IN CONNEMARA.

that there is any special hardship involved in traversing its area; the hotels are more numerous than ever, {177} and it is an open question if the accommodation offered at Recess, Clifden, Westport, and many other of the purely tourist points is not the equal of any in Ireland. They have not the electric light in many instances, and often not water "laid on," but the genuine traveller will not care for this if he can but be sure of his bed and board. To feel sure of the former, however, it will be necessary for him to bespeak it in advance if he travels here in the season.

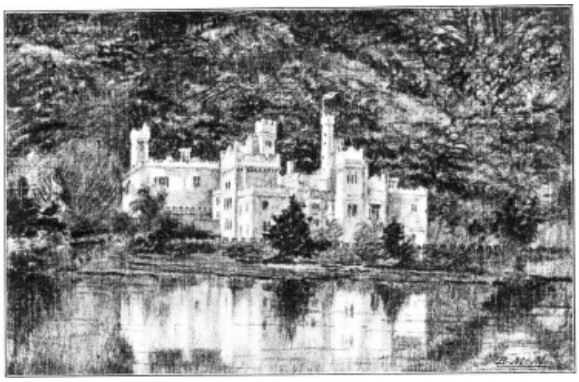
In Connemara there is no great wealth of historical or archæological memorials. In fact, there is a scarcity of both, and one has to take his fill of the wild, natural beauties of the rock-bound coast scenery, the bracing atmosphere, and the wholly unspoiled charm of the place, which, in spite of the advent of the great hotels before mentioned, has not yet become travel-worn.

Lough Carib, which is possessed (at Oughterard) of a fine ruined castle, just north of Galway, is the largest of the score of purple, deep-looking lakes with which the western part of the county is dotted. The {178} scenery of lake and sea, of bracken-clad hills and plains, and of great sombre, gloomy mountains makes up an ensemble of surpassing beauty. The centres of population are few, far between, and of minute dimensions.

The railway line from Galway ends at Clifden, a town so unimportant and quiet that, in itself, it does not warrant remark. It was founded in the reign of George IV., and this early foundation consisted of but a single house, though it is the gateway to the wonderful coast scenery of the region to the northward, not actually in Connemara, but what is known as "Joyce's Country."

Of all the landlocked bays of this region, none equals Killary Harbour, which is simply the elongated estuary of the tiny river Eriff.

The hamlet of Leenane is the metropolis of these parts, and is so very small and unimportant that it would hardly be remarked, except for the fact that no other of even the same rank lies within a radius of twenty miles. The situation of Leenane is charming, at the head of Great Killary. Around about are hills of mountainous pretentions, and before its {179}



KYLEMORE CASTLE.

doors is a *fiord*, as ample and as calm as many, of more fame, to be found in Norway. Seaward, the great hills come down to the water's edge and almost join hands across the narrow mouth of the estuary, forming a sheltered and landlocked haven of so great a depth as to allow anchorage for even a great battle-ship. {181}

Between Galway and Clifden is Recess, a point of vantage from which to visit much that is characteristic of the scenery of Connemara. Firstly, the region is of interest to the fisherman; secondly, the geologist; and, thirdly, to all lovers of nature, which, judging from the recent popularity of "nature books," is perhaps much the largest class.

The chief topographical feature, which forms the background to Recess, is the mountain range of the "Twelve Bens," a glorious group of dark-mantled mountains with stony peaks and flinty-quartz hearts.

One may tramp Connemara for weeks, and not know all its beauty-spots, or he may scamper around it by coach and rail in two days, and depart thinking he has seen it all; but in either case, his memory, if it be a good one, will sooner or later call him to task for his presumption. For this reason, it is manifestly presumptuous to attempt to give its proper rank to its great wealth of natural attractions among the various collections which Ireland possesses. {182}

The scenery about Recess is a picturesque combination of lake and river and mountain; but, to the southward, there are wild and rugged bits of coast and red bracken-covered hills, which look to-day exactly as they did in times primeval.

Lough Glendalough, which lies immediately before Recess, is but the foreground of a lovely picture which it will take many days to dissect and fully appreciate.

There has ever been a dispute as to whether the glory of the "Twelve Bens" really belonged to Recess or Leenane. It certainly matters little, since they are a wonderfully impressive background viewed from either point.

It must be a well-booted and strong-limbed pedestrian who will essay the task of ascending these famous mountains. Benbaun is the monarch of the Bens, and is 2,395 feet in height. Not a very great altitude as Continental {183}

KILLARY HARBOUR.

mountains go, but withal a very respectable eminence to climb. {185}

North of Achill is Black Sod Bay, whose memory comes down to us through Kipling's reminiscence in "A Fleet in Being." More anciently, it was one of the harbours where a part of the ill-fated Armada was supposed to have gone ashore. There are no great centres of population here in the bleak northwest of County Mayo, and there are no architectural remains of note; but there is local colour, and much of it, for one who would study the poor Irish peasant on his native heath.

Until one rounds the headland of Benwee, and passes the "Stags of Broadhaven,"—a head of deep-water pinnacles of rock whose jagged outlines have been likened to a stag's antlers,—and reaches Killala Bay, there is naught of twentieth-century civilization to remind one he is not living in other days, or certainly in other lands and among other associations than those which city folk have come to consider necessaries.

Killala Bay is flanked on the west by Downpatrick Head, which rises two thousand feet sheer above the sea-level. It is one of Ireland's true wonders, but attracts few visitors save migratory sea-fowl. {186}

Killala itself, one learns from the "Life of St. Patrick," is a place of great age. The holy man himself—

“Came to a pleasant place where the river Muadas (Moy) empties itself into the ocean; and on the south banks of said river he built a noble church called Kill Aladh, of which he made one of his disciples, Muredach, the first bishop.”

The present cathedral was entirely rebuilt in the seventeenth century, and has no architectural importance. Close by, on a knoll, about which the village is built, is a round tower, eighty-four feet high and fifty-one feet in circumference.

“At Kilcummin, on the west side of Killala Bay, a body of French troops, under General Humbert, landed, August 22, 1798, with the object of supporting the United Irishmen. They at once took Killala and Ballina, and at Castlebar the government levies were in such haste to retire without fighting as to give rise to the nickname, ‘Castlebar Races.’”

Ballina, at the head of Killala Bay, is the “tourist resort” of the region. It is pleasant and delightful in all {187}
of its aspects, and in its neighbourhood are some very interesting architectural remains. There are, as is often the case, a Roman Catholic and a Protestant cathedral in the town, and an Augustinian monastery, a ruin of a fifteenth-century structure, also many attractive vistas and spots most worthy of the brush and pencil of the artist.

These attractions pall in the mind of the local spreader of publicity, who extols only the size and varieties of fish which may be taken in the river Moy and other near-by waters.

From Ballina one reaches Sligo in five and a half hours by means of that still prevalent institution, the genuine Irish “low-backed car.”

Somewhere in the county of Sligo is the “Valley of the Black Pig,” which is possessed of a legend which recounts how, for generations, the Irish peasantry have comforted themselves in adversity by the memory of a great battle fought here in this valley.

W. B. Yeats tells how, a few years ago, in the barony of Lisadell in Sligo, a peasant would fall to the {188}
ground in a trance as it were, and rave out a description of the bloody battle which once took place.

This shows, at least, that tradition and legend alike die hard in the minds of the people, and when Mr. Yeats tells us that men have told him that they have seen the girths instantaneously rot and fall from horses; and that few, if any, who enter the Black Valley ever come out alive, we realize fully how close we are, even in these times, to the age of superstition in Ireland.

Mr. Yeats furthermore eulogized the incident in verse.

“The dew drops slowly; the dreams gather; unknown spears
Suddenly hurtle before my dream-awakened eyes;
And then the clash of fallen horsemen, and the cries
Of unknown perishing armies beat about my ears.
We, who are labouring by the cromlech on the shore,
The gray cairn on the hill, when day sinks drowned in dew,
Being weary of the world’s empires, bow down to you,
Master of the still stars, and of the flaming door.”

Sligo itself, with its ten thousand souls and its important and matter-of-fact seafaring trades, is a centre {189}
for journeying afoot or awheel amid many charming scenes of lough and lake and sea and shore.

Southward is Carrick on Shannon, the gateway to the Shannon’s lakes and rivers; northward is the Bay of Donegal, backed by its famous rugged “Highlands;” and, eastward, is Lough Erne, which, with its upper and lower lakes and the river Erne trickling minutely southward, is quite the rival of the long-drawn-out Shannon, or would be if the tide of popular fancy ever turned that way. Enniskillen is the metropolis of Lough Erne. Locally it is known as the Island City by reason of its being apparently surrounded by the all-enfolding waters of the upper and lower lakes. Its fame lies principally in its entrancing situation, and the memory of its various regiments of Enniskillen Dragoons who have fought and won gloriously in many of England’s “little wars,” and big ones, too, for that matter. The colours borne by the two Enniskillen regiments at Waterloo are still preserved in the parish church. {190}

Until the days of James I., Enniskillen was no more than a stronghold of the Maguires, but it then gained much prominence through the eventful part it played in the domestic struggles and troubles of the latter half of the seventeenth century. Of the old castle, which has braved so many fights, only a small portion remains, and is incorporated in the modern military barracks, which, in one way, indicate the importance of Enniskillen.

“The Falls of Erne,” at Ballyshannon, where the river joins its estuary with its rapid, tumbling torrent falling over a thirty-foot wall of rock, indicate in no unmistakable manner the volume of water which flows from source to sea. At Ballyshannon, which has more than a local renown among disciples of Izaak Walton, is the famous “salmon leap” which, at certain seasons, provides a display of the wonderful acrobatic ability of this gamy fish. But a short three miles from Ballyshannon is Belleek, with its famous china factories which produce a peculiarly lustrous egg-shell ware much admired for its simplicity and crudeness of form, but very transparent and light. Here, too, are another series of rapids,

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A Detail of Sligo Abbey

as great in their way as those farther down-stream. Sir Joseph Paxton called them “the most picturesque in the world,” but one should judge for himself. They are marvellously effective, however, for the river falls nearly 150 feet in three miles or less. {193}

Sligo itself, in spite of its commercial importance, is not greatly appealing in its interest, if one excepts its old abbey, now a ruin, but once an exceedingly ambitious Dominican establishment. Founded in 1252, it was destroyed by a fire in 1414, though immediately rebuilt. Its Gothic is of that superlative quality known best in the superb monkish erections of the Continent of Europe. There are various monuments yet to be seen therein of local and historical interest, but the chief attraction is what remains of the beautiful cloister, fairly perfect as to preservation, and surrounding three sides of a rectangle. There are forty-six arches, each about four feet and a half in height, all elaborately carved, and quite different one from another.

By an ancient and inalienable right, the abbey grounds are still used as a Roman Catholic burial-place. {194}

CHAPTER VIII.

THE DONEGAL HIGHLANDS

THE Bay of Donegal, and indeed the whole Donegal district, is mellowed and tempered by the everflowing Gulf Stream, which, so the scientists say, were it diverted by any terrestrial disturbance, would give to the entire British Isles the temperature and climate of Labrador. As this event is hardly likely to take place, and certainly cannot be foretold, the interest in the subject must rank with that which one takes in the announcement of the statisticians, for instance, that an express-train travelling at sixty miles an hour would take millions of years to reach Saturn, were it once headed in that direction and had the elevating and sustaining qualities of an air-ship.

Certainly, the mean temperature of the whole south and west coast of Ireland is marvellously mild, and {195} that of Donegal is exceptionally so.

The cliffs of Slieve League, which form a jagged, many-coloured precipice, rise at a sharp angle from the northern shore of Donegal Bay to the summit of the storm and wave-riven mountain, a rock wall 1,972 feet high. It is a grand and noble headland, as a glance at the map will show, and is one of the most lofty elevations seen from Bundoran and the southern shores of the bay; moreover it is accounted unique in all the world, by reason of its marvellous colouring.

Bundoran is a bustling, thriving place, but of the tourist order *pur sang*, with golf-links, electric lights, and up-to-date hotels, and, for that reason, if for no other, is a place for the genuine lover of the road to avoid.

Donegal itself is an improvement. It is a small but attractively placed town at the head of its own bay, and, in spite of its being a coast town, it is more allied with agricultural interests than with trade by sea.

The guide-books tell one little of Donegal, and so much the better. One enjoys finding out things for {196} oneself, and so one has practically a virgin field at Donegal unless he will delve deep into frowsy historical works, such as the “Annals” of the “Four Masters” of the old Abbey of Donegal. The retreat where they patched and pieced together this ancient record is no more, but it stood, “proud, grand, and rich” upon the site still marked by some ruinous heaps of stones.

Donegal has the usual accompaniment of a castle, but, in this case, it is a sixteenth-century descendant of a former stronghold. It is a fine Jacobean building, built up out of the remnants of its parent, and, with its tall gabled towers and turrets, is in every way a satisfactory example of a mediæval baronial residence, though differing in many essentials from those common throughout Ireland.

Killybegs, between Donegal and Slieve League, on the north shore of the bay, is one of those picturesque coast villages on a landlocked tiny bay, of which so many examples exist in the British Islands. It is no more attractive, nor any less so, than others, but it has this distinction—a lengthy sojourn there will demonstrate beyond all doubt that one {197}

DONEGAL CASTLE.

can live far away from a great city and yet never miss its whilom attractions. {199}

With many other places similarly situated, a run “up to town” is inevitable and necessary; here, one is apparently as completely isolated from the distractions of the great world outside as if he were marooned on a desert isle, with the advantage, however, of being able to get away at once by means of what, to all appearances, is a toy railway running to Donegal.

Carrick is another village a little further on and similarly isolated,—more so, if anything, in that the diminutive engine and its toy carriages stop, in its not rapid course, at Killybegs, and one journeys onward by “car.”

To the southward are the heights of Slieve League, Malin Beg and Teelin Head, and, if one will brave the waves to the extent of rounding these headlands by boat, he will then experience something of the feeling which inspired the following lines, which, if rather pretentious, are in no way fulsome:

"Once seen in morning sunshine, the view of the southern face of Slieve League, rising steeply from the sea, can never be forgotten; the impressiveness and matchless colouring of the rock defy description; its {200} beauty must be seen to be believed. Its glorious colours are grouped in masses on the mountain's face: stains of metal, green, amber, gold, yellow, white, red, and every variety of shade are observed, particularly when seen under a bright sun, contrasting in a wonderful manner with the dark blue waters beneath."

Some one has compared these variegated cliffs to the effects to be seen, elsewhere, only in the Yellowstone Park and the canyons of Arizona or Colorado. Those who know Bierstadt or Moran's paintings of these wonders of nature, or, better yet, the originals themselves, will appreciate the comparison.

The festival of St. Adamnan, eighth in descent from the great King Nial and from Conal, the ancestor of St. Columbkille, is kept with great solemnity in many churches in Ireland, of which he is titular patron, and in the whole diocese of Raphoe, in the county of Donegal, of which he was a native. The abbatial church of Raphoe was changed into a cathedral soon after, when St. Eunan was consecrated the first bishop. He originally entered the monastery founded by St. Columba, and became its fifth abbot. In 701 he was {201} appointed ambassador to King Alfred of the Northern Saxons, to demand reparation for the injuries committed upon Irish subjects in Neath. It was St. Adamnan who first prevailed upon the Church authorities in Ireland to celebrate Easter at the true and appointed time.

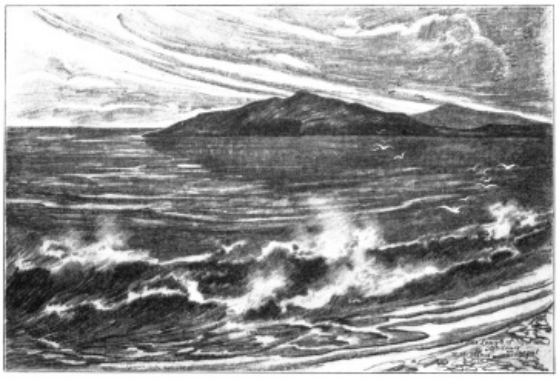
When he died, he left among his effects a treatise on the right time of keeping Easter, which disposed his people sometime after to forsake their erroneous computation. He wrote, too, the life of St. Columbkille, and also certain canons, and a curious description of the Holy Land as that country stood in his time. This book furnished the Venerable Bede with his principal memorials.

In this work on the Holy Land, St. Adamnan mentions the tombs of St. Simeon and of St. Joseph at Jerusalem, and many relics of the passion of Christ, as well as the impression of the feet of the Saviour on Mount Olivet, covered with a church of a round figure, with a hole open on the top, over the impression of the footsteps. He also mentions grasshoppers in the deserts of the Jordan, which the common people eat, boiled {202} with oil; and a portion of the Cross in the Rotunda Church in Constantinople, which was exposed on a golden altar on the three last days of Holy Week, when the emperor, court, army, clergy, and others went to the church at different hours, to kiss that sacred wood.

Two landmarks, known to all travellers to the Clyde from America, by way of the north of Ireland, are The Bloody Foreland and Tory Island.

The guide-books tell but little concerning this wild land of promontory and cliff, and with some reason, too, for there is little or no population there, except the fisherfolk and a rather primitive race of agriculturists.

Donegal is assuredly a land of intermittent beauty, and the hill-encircled loughs and the verdant glens of Donegal Bay give way here to a stern, relentless gray stone formation, with here and there patches of green and purple which indicate nothing so much as the lonesomeness which is inevitable under such conditions. But there is an impressiveness in it all which is inexplicable, since the scenery, {203}



LAKE OF SHADOWS, DONEGAL.

though by no means tame, is not of the grandeur of many other parts. {205}

It is doubtful if Tory Island—which is but a mere name, even to the few who know it at all—will ever be inundated by any large flow of travel. If it was, there would doubtless be little accommodation provided for them, for the simple reason that it does not exist, though the island is possessed of a population of some hundreds of men and women and children, with schools and a church—in fact two, which are ever a point of contention and argument among their respective constituencies. It was not long since that the cleric in charge of one of these houses of God nearly starved, because he would not desert his post, and "the powers that be" on the mainland had evidently abandoned him to his fate, or had forgotten him altogether.

Between the Tory Island and Malin Head, that other beacon-light for seafarers, is the great inlet or fiord of Lough Swilly, meaning in Celtic "Lake of Shadows," which, though quite as beautiful as Lough Foyle, its neighbour on the east, is, for some unexplained reason, quite neglected. Of Lough Foyle, at the head of whose {206} ample waters sits that city familiarly called Derry,—built by certain citizens of London in the reign of James I., —Sir Walter Scott has said:

"Nothing can be more favourable than this specimen of Ireland—a beautiful variety of cultivated slopes, intermixed with banks of wood; rocks skirted with a distant ridge of healthy hills, watered by various brooks; the glens or banks being in general planted or covered with copse."

This is not a particularly vivid statement, to be sure, but it is true and temperate, and far more likely to fit in with the views of the casual observer than the rather florid word-paintings of other parts of Ireland

which have been offered by rhapsodists of all shades of opinion.

CHAPTER IX.

LONDONDERRY AND THE GIANT'S CAUSEWAY

LONDONDERRY was the original site of an abbey for the canons of the Augustinian order founded by St. Columbkille in 546. There was also an abbey for Cistercian nuns founded in 1218, and a Dominican friary founded in 1274, "by request of St. Dominick," as the chronicles put it, whatever significance that statement may have.

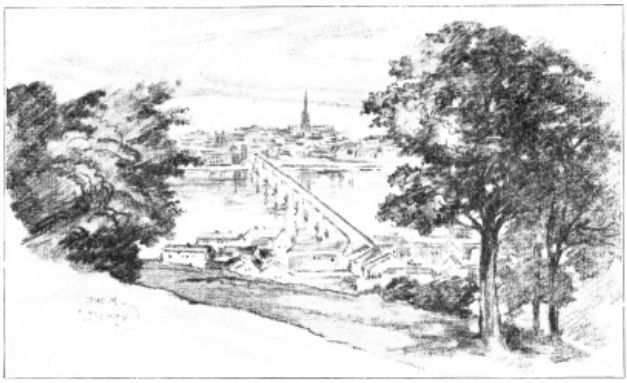
Derry, as it is commonly called, owes its name to the confiscation of the estates of the O'Neills in 1609, most of the lands being bestowed on various citizens of London. Derry, the ancient name, means "the place of oaks." All this part of Ulster was once heavily forested, but it is now conspicuously bare. Nearly 160,000 acres of the county are still owned by the Irish Society, while two London livery companies, the Skinners' and the Drapers', are also owners of large holdings. {208}

Derry is usually described as "a prettily situated town, built upon a high hill." It is quite in keeping with the description, and is also a place of much interest, as will be found upon a close acquaintance, though it is unquestionably a curious mixture of old and new, of foundries, distilleries, and manufactories, which, at every turn, are contrasted with a celebrity and an interest quite of the past.

Londonderry was formerly fortified, contrary to the usual Irish conception of military science and architecture, which favoured the method advanced in the Spartan proverb, "The city is best environed which has walls of men instead of brick."

There were originally four gates (afterward six) piercing the city walls, Bishops Gate, Ships Quay Gate, New Gate, and Ferry Gate.

The Cathedral of Derry is a plain Gothic structure far inferior in rank and splendour to those of its class in other lands, and dates only from the early seventeenth century. The episcopal palace occupies the site of St. Columbkille's abbey. {209}



DERRY.

The chief event in Derry's history, and one which is called to the visitor's attention at every turning-point and stopping-place, was the siege so graphically described by Macaulay. {211}

In brief, the event took place thus:

"A letter was sent to the Earl of Mount Alexander at Cumber in County Down on December 3, 1688, giving the information that six days later certain numbers throughout Ireland, in pursuance of an oath which they had taken, were to rise and massacre the Protestants, men, women, and children. This letter furthermore warned the earl to take particular care of himself, as a captain's commission would be the reward of the man who would murder him."

The information reached Derry too late to secure the safety of the city. The terrified Protestants were filled with doubt as to what measures of precaution should be taken. Two companies of the Irish appeared on the opposite bank of the stream, and the officers were ferried over to make proposals for entering the town, which was nearly betrayed into their hands by the treachery of the deputy mayor, who was inclined to favour King James II. Impatient for the return of their officers, the soldiers crossed the river, and came to within three hundred yards of the Ferry Gate. {212}

"The young men of the city observing this," says Gordon's "History of Ireland," "about eight or nine of them, whose names deserve to be preserved in letters of gold, *viz.*, Henry Campsie, William Crookshanks, Robert Sherrard, Alexander Irwin, James Steward, Robert Morrison, Alexander Coningham, Samuel Hunt, with James Spike, John Coningham, William Cairns, Samuel Harvey, and some others who soon joined them, ran to the main-guard, seized the keys, after a slight opposition, came to the Ferry Gate, drew up the bridge, and locked the gate just as Lord Antrim's soldiers had advanced within sixty yards of it."

The siege lasted one hundred and five days, during which time the townspeople were reduced to the direst extremities. "Reduced," writes the historian, "to the extremity of distress, and endeavouring to support the remains of life by such miserable food as the flesh of dogs and vermin, even tallow and hides, nor able to find more than two days' provisions of such substances, the garrison was still assured by the harangues of Walker, in a prophetic spirit, that God would relieve them; and men reduced almost to shadows made desperate sallies, but were unable to pursue their advantage." The besiegers had thrown a boom across the river to prevent all navigation, and Kirk, the Orange admiral, had already been deterred by it from attempting the relief of the town. At length two provision ships and a frigate drew near to the city. One ship "dashed with {213}

giant strength against the barrier, and grounded, though subsequently floated out into deep water."

Nearly twenty-five hundred citizens died of famine or at the hands of the enemy during the siege.

Near Londonderry is the Grianan of Aillach, upon which are the remains of what is thought to have been an ancient royal residence which, in splendour and importance, must have ranked high among the ancient palaces of the Irish kings.

By some, however, it has been asserted that this remarkable work, of which, to be sure, only fragmentary ruins remain, was a former temple dedicated to the worship of the sun. At any rate, it was evidently a {214} splendid and imposing structure.

Its present appearance is that of a truncated cairn of extraordinary dimensions, which, on closer inspection, proves to be a building constructed with every attention to masonic regularity, both in design and workmanship. A circular wall, of considerable thickness, encloses an area of eighty-two feet in diameter. Judging from the numbers of stones which have fallen off on every side, so as to form, in fact, a sloping glacis of ten or twelve feet broad all around it, this wall must have been of considerable height, probably from ten to twelve feet; but its thickness varies, that portion of it extending from north to south, and embracing the western half of the circle, being but ten or eleven feet, whereas, in the corresponding, or eastern half, the thickness increases to sixteen or seventeen, particularly at the entrance.

One of the inevitable illustrations of the old-time school geographies of our youth was a representation of the "Giant's Causeway," with its queer, hassocklike, basaltic stones, built in fantastic forms, like the {215} structures children themselves are wont to erect from their building-blocks.

Next in order come the books of pictorial travel and "table books" of the "wonders of the world," where the same picture appears again; and, finally, the astute proprietors of ardent spirit which is distilled at Bushmills,—an ancient town of perhaps a thousand inhabitants, between Portrush, Coleraine, and the basalt-bound coast of Northern Ireland,—have covered walls and fences with quite the most pleasing and alluring of all the pictorial representations of this unique rocky formation.

By these various means, the aspect of "The Giant's Causeway" has become familiar to all. So, too, most people are familiar with the chief characteristics; for which reason it is useless to repeat them in detail here.

It was in the last years of the seventeenth century that this wonderland of nature first attracted the attention of the inquisitive, and from that time on its peculiarities have drawn many thousands of visitors of all ranks, from the mere pleasure and sensation loving tourist of convention to the profound scientist and {216} antiquarian.

The five and six-sided basalt rocks are piled perpendicularly one upon the other, in contrast to most rocky formations, which lie on their sides, and the varying heights of the columns form those significantly named groups known as the "Organ and Pipes," "Samson's Ribs," and the three "Causeways," the chief of which gives its name to the group.

By those who have delved into the subject, armed with a profound geological knowledge, plummet and line, and rule and level, we are informed that "There is only one triangular pillar throughout the whole extent of the three Causeways. It stands near the east side of the Grand Causeway. There are but three pillars of nine sides; one of them situated in the Honeycomb, and the others not far from the triangular pillar just noticed. The total number having four and eight sides bears but a small proportion to the entire mass of pillars, of which it may be safely computed that ninety-nine out of one hundred have either five, six, or seven sides."

For a further description, which shall be {217}

THE HONEYCOMB, GIANT'S CAUSEWAY.

brief and to the point, we have the remarks of Köhl, the antiquarian who devoted so much of his energy to a {219} study of Ireland's peculiar and rare beauties.

He says: "With all the explanations that can be offered with respect to the origin of this phenomena, so much is left unexplained that they answer very little purpose. On a close investigation of these wonderful formations, so many questions arise that one scarcely ventures to utter them. With inquiries of this nature, perhaps not the least gain is the knowledge of how much lies beyond the limits of our inquiries, and how many things that lie so plainly before our eyes, which we can see and handle, may yet be wrapped in unfathomable mystery. We see in the Giant's Causeway the most certain and obvious effects produced by the operation of active and powerful forces which entirely escape our scrutiny. We walk over the heads of some forty thousand columns (for this number has been counted by some curious and leisurely persons), all beautifully cut and polished, formed of such neat pieces, so exactly fitted to each other, and so cleverly supported, that we might fancy we had before us the work of ingenious human artificers; and yet what we {220}

behold is the result of the immutable laws of nature, acting without any apparent object, and by a process which must remain a mystery for ever to our understanding. Even the simplest inquiries it is often impossible to answer; such, for instance, as how far these colonnades run out beneath the sea, and how far into the land, which throws over them a veil as impenetrable as that of the ocean."

There are to be found in this group a great number of caves; some of a unique character, and many more like most other caves, presenting no striking peculiarity. Portcoon Cave is noted for its echo, and Dunkerry Cave for the fact that it can only be entered from the sea.

There is a "Giant's Well," of course, which legend tells was but one of the many domestic arrangements which nature had provided for the former Gargantuan inhabitants of these parts, but the chief of all the attractions is the Causeway itself, which is divided into three tongues, the Little, the Middle, and the Grand Causeways. {221}

"The Giant's Organ," with its pipes, suggested by the basaltic erections of various heights, possesses perhaps the greatest sentimental interest. The guide-books tell one that he should imagine some gigantic personage seated as if before a keyboard, and ringing out wild melodies in quick succession. It will take an exceedingly vivid imagination to call up this inspiration, and one had much better accept the tale as set forth in the ancient legend, and not attempt to revivify the scene in these advanced days, when the electric-tram from Bushmills is depositing its hundreds daily at the very foot of the Causeway.

There are traditions without end which attempt to account for this wonderful natural production of the Causeway itself, but one shall suffice here. If the reader wants more he can get them without number and without end if he will but listen to the voluble guides of the neighbourhood. The Giant Fin M'Coul was the champion of Ireland, and felt very much aggrieved at the insolent boasting of a certain Caledonian giant, who offered to beat all who came before him, and even dared to tell Fin that if it weren't for the wetting of {222} himself, he would swim over and give him a drubbing. Fin at last applied to the king, who, not daring, perhaps, to question the doings of such a weighty man, gave him leave to construct a causeway right to Scotland, on which the Scot walked over and fought the Irishman. Fin turned out victor, and with an amount of generosity quite becoming his Hibernian descent, kindly allowed his former rival to marry and settle in Ireland, which the Scot was not loath to do, seeing that at that time living in Scotland was none of the best, and everybody knows that Ireland was always the richest country in the world. Since the death of the giants, the Causeway, being no longer wanted, has sunk under the sea, only leaving a portion of itself visible here, a little at the island of Rathlin, and the portals of the grand gate on Staffa off the Scottish coast.

This certainly seems an acceptably plausible legend, so far as legends can meet those conditions. It is certainly a picturesque one, and the great gateway of the island of Staffa has much if not all the attributes of its brother across the sea.

As a whole, the Causeways and their attributes are indeed suggestive—as has been said before by some {223} discerning person—of a scene from Dante's Inferno. More particularly they might be likened to a drawing of Gustave Doré's, illustrating that immortal poem, as we have mostly drawn our conception of what that land was like from his work, rather than from Dante's descriptions.

At all events, it is a huge nightmare of scenic effect, although a pleasant one.

Between Portrush, really the seaport of Coleraine, and the Giant's Causeway is Dunluce Castle, "the most picturesque ruin ever beheld," said an enthusiastic Irishman. As the Scot will tell you the same of Melrose, the statement may well be left in doubt.

At any rate, Dunluce, like Dunseverick, the ancient seat of the O'Cahans or O'Kanes, has been in part hewn out of the coast-line rocks, and possesses a precipitous and jagged barrier which might well be expected to forbid any attack by sea. It is, moreover, entirely separated from the mainland, though at low water connected therewith by a miniature causeway in much the same manner as was originally the famous {224} abbey of Mont St. Michel in Normandy.

Among the ruins is a small vaulted chamber in which, it is believed by a great many folk around about, a banshee resides. The reason assigned for this belief is that the floor is always perfectly clean. It is difficult to follow this line of reasoning; more probably the true solution of the problem is that the wind, having free access to and egress from the apartment, carries dust and dirt before it. Another chamber in the northeast side has fearful attractions for the venturesome. The rock which formerly supported this room has fallen away, and, like a dovecot, it is suspended in the air only by its attachment to the main building.

The erection of Dunluce Castle has been assigned to De Courcy, Earl of Ulster, and the castle was in the hands of the English in the fifteenth century. In 1580, or thereabouts, Colonel M'Donald, the founder of the family of MacDonnells of Antrim, came to Ireland to assist Tyrconnel against the O'Neill, a powerful chieftain, and was hospitably entertained by M'Quillan, the Lord of Dunluce, whom he assisted in subduing his savage {225} neighbours. Being successful in their enterprise, M'Donald returned to Dunluce, and was pressed to winter in the castle, having his men quartered on the vassals of M'Quillan. M'Donald, however, took advantage of his position as a guest, says history, and privately married the daughter of his host. Upon this marriage the MacDonnells afterward rested their claim to M'Quillan's territory. A conspiracy among the Irish to murder the Scottish chief and his followers was discovered by his wife, and they made their escape, but returned afterward and came to possess a considerable portion of the county of Antrim. The affairs of the M'Quillans and their successors, the MacDonnells, have left endless traditions, but the descendants of the former are now no more known as "kings and lords," having fallen to the condition of "hewers of wood and drawers of water," says a local historian. The Scottish family became lords of Antrim and Dunluce.

In the autumn of 1814 a visit was paid to the ruins of Dunluce by Sir Walter Scott, who observed a great resemblance in it to Dunottar Castle in Kincardineshire. A detailed description of the ruins is given in his {226} diary.

Just off the Giant's Causeway is Rathlin Island, between which and the Mull of Cantyre on the Scottish coast all the Clyde-bound ships feel their way and the traveller by sea knows that he is well in toward the Firth of Clyde. Rathlin Island may naturally enough be presumed to be of the same strata of rocky formation of which the Causeway is built, practically a link which once may have bound Ireland and Scotland.

Robert Bruce, in 1306, during the wars between him and Baliol, fled to this island with three hundred men, returning to Scotland in the spring of the following year. A ruined castle, said to be inhabited by Bruce, and still bearing his name, is situated on a high, almost perpendicular piece of land, and from it may be obtained a view of the Scottish coast. Many of the inhabitants, who number above a thousand, speak only the ancient Irish language.

All the world knows Carrick-a-Rede and its famous rope-bridge. It has even been pictured in the school geographies along with such wonders of the world as Niagara Falls and the {227}

CARRICK-A-REDE.

Pyramids of Egypt. It is a precipitous island-rock, a hundred feet or more high, which is linked to the {229} mainland by an airy swinging bridge of ropes and “slats,” sixty feet long. There are no sights on the tiny island itself, and the bridge is only meant for the accommodation of fisher and shepherd folk, who, according to the guide-books, run across it heavily laden with baskets or carcasses, and in a manner amazing to the ordinary beholder. In practice, or at least so far as the casual traveller is concerned, they do this only as a sort of side-show before an appreciative audience who may have paid the price of admission. Nevertheless, it is a more or less frightful crossing, and one which seems to fascinate all who view it; so much so that the desire to emulate the venturesome native rises high in the stranger’s breast. There is no hand-rail to the bridge, only a rope that swings clear away from the slight foothold if it is heavily grasped; and each step makes the whole fabric quiver like a jelly from end to end. Still, by stepping quickly and lightly, and keeping the eyes fixed on the opposite rock, the pass can be made; and if the venturesome traveller misses his {230} footing, and takes a header of a hundred feet, “he will not be drowned,” says the enterprising writer of a certain railway-guide; “the fall generally kills him outright.” The return journey is the worst, the bridge sloping downward toward the mainland. The local fisher-people, however, are quite accustomed to getting out boats in order to release some unlucky voyager from imprisonment on the rock, when discretion has suddenly over-powered valour at the commencement of the return trip; but again it is a question of price. It will be gathered from the above that the writer’s advice, concerning the crossing of the rope-bridge, is paraphrased in one word, “Don’t.” {231}

CHAPTER X.

ANTRIM AND DOWN

JOURNEYING from the Giant's Causeway to Belfast and Dublin, through the north-eastern counties of Antrim and Down, one comes upon a region little known to the casual traveller, who is usually smitten at once with the charms of Killarney and the South, and who neglects this more conveniently and comfortably traversed region.

Truth to tell, the large centres of population of Dublin and Belfast, and sundry visitors from the "Midlands" of England, have appropriated it as their own playground, and, "in the season," are found here in large numbers.

This need be no detraction from the charms of the region, which, if not historically and picturesquely possessed of the same qualities as the middle and south of Ireland, at least has the advantage of being an unworn road to the majority of travellers. {232}

Drogheda, on the estuary of the river Boyne, is the first happy hunting-ground for the student of history and architecture, after he leaves the immediate environs of Dublin itself.

Drogheda is at once ancient and modern. Its shops and factories, its shipping and its tramways, are evidences of that modernity which is ever obtrusive in an old-world shrine of history.

Drogheda, according to one authority, was formerly called Tredagh, and originally Imbbar Colpa. "It is so very ancient that it is supposed to have been founded by Heremon, one of the sons of Milesius, who, having arrived from Spain with Heber and his other brothers at Imbbar Sceine (Bantry Bay), was subsequently separated from Heber by a storm, and, while Heber regained the Kerry coast, Heremon, after innumerable hardships, put into Drogheda, where he effected a landing, but with the loss of his brothers and Colpa, the swordsman, who perished in the bay, and from which circumstance the town derived its name." Thus writes Anthony Marmion, in his "History of the Maritime Ports of Ireland." "There can be no doubt," he continues, {233} "that an eastern colony of Mithraic, or sun-worshippers, had been early established in the neighbourhood of Drogheda." Coming, however, to less remote and fabulous happenings, Drogheda, whose Irish name was Droiceheadatha, the Bridge of the Ford, was taken by Turgesius the Dane in 911, and made a stronghold for raids into the surrounding country. Its importance was also recognized by the Anglo-Normans, who built a bridge across the Boyne at this point. The most celebrated military event in the town's history was its siege and capture by Cromwell in 1649.

The walls and gates, so unusual in Ireland, were formerly a line of defence a mile and a half or more in circumference, and, from the very substantial remains of the St. Laurence Gate and the West or Butler Gate, it may be inferred that they were a wonderfully effective defence, sharing with the walls of Derry the glory of being the most elaborate works of their kind in Ireland.

The most curious architectural embellishment of Drogheda is the famous Magdalen steeple—all that {234} remains of the Dominican Abbey founded in 1224 by the Archbishop of Armagh, whose remains lie buried in the ruins.

Here, in 1395, Richard II. of England held court, and within the building four Irish princes did homage to the king, and were knighted by him. Cromwell's cannon razed the building until only the grim, gaunt tower or steeple was left. A sepulchral cairn of stone, known as the Mill Mount, appears to have been the ancient citadel of Drogheda. A mythical hero of the prechristian era, "Ghoban the Smith," is supposed to have been buried here.

North of the Boyne estuary is Dundalk Bay, in itself a beautifully disposed body of water which, if not possessed of the ruggedness of the fiords of Western Ireland, is in every way an attractive setting for Dundalk itself, which is mostly a town of one long vertebrate street along which short spines radiate for a brief distance and lose themselves in the background of hills or in the strand of the sea.

Edward Bruce, the brother of the Scottish Robert, stormed Dundalk after Bannockburn, and lived here, after taking the town, for two years. He died in the engagement fought near Dundalk with the English army, {235} in 1318.

In 1649 Monk held the town for the king against Cromwell.

At the head of Carlingford Lough is Newry, pleasantly situated in a valley overlooked by the Carlingford Mountains. It is one of the most ancient towns in the island, being famed even in Irish bardic literature. It was also the seat of a monastery, where St. Patrick himself, it is said, planted a yew-tree, referred to in no complimentary strain in Swift's satiric couplet:

> "High Church, low steeple,
> Dirty streets, and proud people."

Newry took to itself the admonition, cleaned itself up in later years, and has become in all respects a flourishing modern town.

A Cistercian abbey was founded here in 1175, according to the "Monasticum Hibernica," but no remains exist to-day to suggest its former importance.

Rostrevor is the chief tourist centre of Carlingford Lough. It is confidently claimed by many to be the {236} most popular resort in all Ireland, which it evidently is.

Moreover, it is a marvellously pretty place of the stage-scenery order, but its attractions are somewhat exaggerated. Its popularity is accounted for by its accessibility to Dublin and Belfast, whose work-worn habitants flee here in large numbers, in season and out. Rostrevor, as might be expected, has its popular legend also. It runs as follows:

"The Bell of St. Bronach, now to be seen on the altar of the Catholic Chapel, has a strangely romantic history. There is a ruined Church of Kilbroney on the hillside, not far from the town. For hundreds of years, the legend of a fairy bell had been current about Kilbroney. It was said that, whenever misfortune threatened

the town, the note of a strange, silvery, unearthly sounding bell echoed through the forests. Many heard the bell, but no one succeeded in solving the mystery, or indeed, ever suspected that there was any solution save a supernatural one. In the end of the eighteenth century, however, an ancient tree was blown down, and, in its hollow heart, was found a bronze church-bell of immense size and of great antiquarian value. It was this {237} bell, hidden in the heart of the tree many centuries before, that had sounded its note of death and terror, whenever a storm of unusual force rocked the great tree in whose depths it lay concealed. No doubt it had been hidden in the tree for safety, during some raid of pagan tribes, and by accident, or through the death of the pious ecclesiastic who concealed it, was never removed."

Carlingford itself, and the celebrated beauty of the Lough, will ever appeal to all lovers of nature and romantic associations.

The great attraction is Carlingford Castle, one of King John's Irish fortresses, erected in 1210 by De Courcy at the king's bidding. Some ruined castles are interesting, some rather the reverse. Carlingford Castle belongs to the former class. The courtyard, with its walls eleven feet in thickness, and galleries fitted with recesses for archers at each loop-hole; the curious little secret chamber, which one may reach by climbing up a wall, and through a mass of tangled ivy; the spiral staircase winding up to an airy battlemented height; all these are as interesting as they are picturesque. Underground, there is a range of small, gloomy dungeons, {238} hewn out of the solid rock, where many a gallant life must have been worn away in bitter agony and despair, seven centuries ago, in those times when chivalry and romance were inextricably mixed with brutality. Just above the dungeon-cells runs the ruined stone terrace, looking out to sea, where (tradition says) the lords and ladies who accompanied King John to Ireland used to walk up and down of a summer evening, in the cool of the sunset wind. This of course is most probable, and it is perhaps a not unusual proceeding, still it is pleasant to recall. The lute must often have sounded across the waters of the lough in those golden evening hours, the careless laugh rung out, the silken cloak swung, and the gauzy veil fluttered from the high "sugar-loaf" head-dress, within sound of clanking chains, and cries from half-maddened, famishing, and tortured wretches below. One need go no deeper into history than any account of King John, to understand what kind of treatment his prisoners were likely to receive.

Greenore, at the mouth of Carlingford Lough, is the key to the passenger traffic between England and {239} Belfast, Londonderry, Enniskillen, and other places in the north and northwest of Ireland. It is a remarkable fact that the strategic importance of Carlingford Lough should be thus recognized in a peaceful fashion at the end of the nineteenth century; for one recalls that the ruined castles at Carlingford and Greencastle were built by the Anglo-Normans, at the close of the twelfth and beginning of the thirteenth centuries, to protect their lines of communication when invading, in a far different and more tragic fashion, the hills and dales of Ulster. The frowning ruins of Carlingford Castle still seem to guard the western shore of the lough, while the fortress of Greencastle, on the eastern shore, commands a glorious view from its lofty battlements.

Greenore supposedly presents many attractions for the tourist, but they are mainly of the kind set forth in the tourist programmes of the shipping companies and the railways, and, in fact, they are but of the conventional variety, though it is only fair to say they are here perused under very attractive and charming {240} conditions. But the various journeyings of the collaborators to this volume were not for the sake of sea-bathing, golf, or tennis; hence Greenore is now dismissed—and gladly.

The railway runs the length of Carlingford Lough, along the base of Carlingford Mountain, which rises to nearly two thousand feet, to Newry at the head of the Lough, where, on a rock which projects into the river, stands Narrow Water Castle, built in 1663 on the site of a thirteenth-century edifice erected by Hugh de Lacy.

Ardglass, between Carlingford and Belfast Loughs, is seldom heard of in literature or the news items of the daily press; but it is a quaint little town of half a thousand inhabitants situated on the seacoast, with Dundrum Bay and the Mourne Mountains of County Down for a background.

Once it was the chief port of Ulster (its name, *Ard-glas*, means the green height), and was so important a town that it was guarded by seven castles, but one of which, Jordan's Castle, is to-day in any state of preservation.

The county town of Down is Downpatrick. It is ancient and historic, and has a prospect,

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Grave of St. Patrick, Downpatrick

on the river Quoile, which shows off its imposing cathedral in a most pleasing manner. {243}

The native Kings of Ulster had their residence here before the coming of Christianity. The town was

known anciently to Ptolemy, who called it *Dunum*.

The religious foundation of the place dates from 432 to 440, when St. Patrick established the see and the Abbey of Saul of the Canons Regular, who was superceded in 1183, a few years after the town was taken by John de Courcy, by the Benedictines.

The cathedral of to-day is a rehabilitation of an ancient ecclesiastical building, though to all appearances it is a comparatively modern work and is often credited as such.

Locally, great importance is naturally attached to the supposed fact that Downpatrick is the burial-place of St. Patrick, and a rough, unhewn boulder marks the spot in the churchyard where his bones rest—or do not rest, for there is great and constant doubt as to whether this is really so or not. However, there are, it is to be presumed, many who would like to believe they had visited such a hallowed spot, and perhaps for this reason the want has been supplied. {244}

Moreover, in the old church which stood on the site of the present cathedral, which Harris, the antiquarian, described in 1744, there was an inscription in monkish Latin which, translated, reads:

> "Three saints do rest upon this holy hill,
> St. Patrick, Bridget, and Columbkille."

This would seem to justify in a measure the claim, though the rhyme is pretty bad.

Jeremy Taylor was for a time Bishop of Down, as was also Thomas Percy, celebrated for his famous edition of the "Reliques of Ancient Poetry."

There are many historical and ecclesiastical remains in the immediate neighbourhood, including the Cistercian Abbey of Inch, founded in 1187 by John de Courcy, and the celebrated Wells of Struell, supposedly of great virtue for the lame, the halt, and the blind. To-day their efficacy seems somewhat dimmed, as one does not hear of any remarkable cures which have recently taken place.

About the only convenient way to reach Armagh,—Ireland's most ancient and famous seat of learning,— when making the coast tour of the north of Ireland, is from Belfast. {245}

Armagh, about which so much has been written by all manner of pen-wielders, and about which so much is yet destined to be written, is one of the most attractive towns in Ireland, albeit it is not on the seacoast or on an important waterway.

Newcastle, in the minds of many, is merely the home of "The best golf-links in Ireland." This is perhaps a sign of the advanced age in which we live, but Newcastle, forty miles north of Dublin, can lay claim to more than that.

Newcastle, as a tourist point and "a beauty-spot," really exists by means of, and on account of, Slieve Donard, the highest mountain in Ulster, which hangs its 2,796 feet right over the little seacoast town, and provides non-golfing visitors with a continual field for pleasant excursions. The beautiful estate of Donard Lodge lying on the slope of the mountain is, too, a great attraction, as also are Castlewellan, the seat of the Earl of Annesley, and the Earl of Roden's domain of Tollymore Park; and as these three estates enclose or command most of the beautiful mountain and forest scenery for which Newcastle is noted, they really form the irresistible attractions of the place. The whole range of the beautiful blue Mourne Mountains can be seen from Castlewellan, which lies on the side of Slieve-na-Slat. {246}

Not far from Newcastle is Rostrevor, a pretty ittle village with a church-spire nestling among the trees and overhanging the picturesque coast-line of Carlingford Lough.

Much morbid interest is usually awakened by the recollection of certain events which took place in the neighourhood. At Bloody Bridge was a terrible massacre in 1641; Mourne Park and Mourne Abbey are generally famous spots; the village of Killowen, from which the late Lord Russell of Killowen chose his title, contains the house where Pat Murphy, the Irish giant, was born, and the ruined chapel where the celebrated Yelverton marriage took place in 1861.

Many will recall the details of this famous *cause célèbre*. Pretty Miss Longworth, a Roman Catholic girl of high family, met and was loved by the Protestant Major Yelverton, whom she nursed in the Crimea. A secret marriage was arranged after both had returned to Ireland, and a hurried journey was made from Waterford to Rostrevor. They rowed down the lough to the little chapel next morning, and were married by the parish priest. In after years came the desertion of the bride and an action for maintenance, which was decided by an Irish jury in the lady's favour, but subsequently reversed by the House of Lords. Probably no mixed-marriage case ever excited so much interest in the three kingdoms, and even yet the chapel and the village are inextricably associated with this sad story of love and betrayal. {247} {248}

CHAPTER XI.

THE BOYNE VALLEY

DROGHEDA, at the mouth of the Boyne, first calls to mind the memorable siege by Cromwell, and the "Battle of the Boyne." In 1649 Cromwell landed at Dublin with an army of twelve thousand men besides artillery. Drogheda was the first place he attacked. The assailants were twice repulsed, but the third attack, led by Cromwell in person, was successful; and then commenced that indiscriminate slaughter which has rendered the name of the Protector execrated throughout Ireland.

It was a plain, matter-of-fact, brutal warfare, this, but the battle of the Boyne—associated with the doubly historic little river which rises out of one of Ireland's famous "holy wells," in the county of Kildare—possesses more largely the elements of romance than many another, though they were more bloody and the results of greater moment. {249}

Here, within a mile of Drogheda, where the unlovely obelisk still marks the spot, was fought, in 1690, the celebrated battle between the Prince of Orange and his father-in-law, James II. The armies were nearly equal in strength, thirty thousand men. Five hundred were killed on the side of William of Orange, and one thousand on the other. The account of the flight of James II., taken from Köhl's "Ireland," is interesting:

"James II. displayed but little courage in this memorable battle. He abandoned the field even before the battle was decided, and made a ride of unexampled rapidity through Ireland. In a few hours he reached the castle of Dublin, and in the following day he rode to Waterford, a distance of one hundred English miles. Nevertheless, James sought to throw the whole blame of the defeat on the Irish. On arriving at the castle of Dublin, he met the Lady Tyrconnel, a woman of ready wit, to whom he exclaimed, 'Your countrymen, the Irish, madam, can run very fast, it must be owned.' 'In this, as in every other respect, your Majesty surpasses them, for you have won the race,' was the merited rebuke of the lady." {250}

An obelisk to-day marks the spot where William commenced the attack, and where Schomberg fell. The inscription which it bears is significant, sectarian, and sentimental, it is true; but it is explanatory of much that makers of guide-books have often neglected or ignored.

"Sacred to the glorious memory of King William the Third, who, on the first of July, 1690, passed the river near this place to attack James the Second at the head of a Popish army, advantageously posted on the south side of it, and did on that day, by a single battle, secure to us, and to our posterity, our liberty, laws, and religion. In consequence of this action James the Second left this kingdom and fled to France.

"This memorial of our deliverance was erected in the 9th year of the reign of King George the Second, the first stone being laid by Lionel Sackville, Duke of Dorset, Lord Lieutenant of the Kingdom of Ireland.

"1736."

The entire Boyne valley, restricted though its area is, encompasses much more of the historic past of Ireland than any other spot. There may elsewhere be grander scenery,—admittedly there is,—and there may even be more numerous historic remains, and of greater magnitude; but from Drogheda to its source in Kildare is a grand succession of spots which have made much history for Ireland, and great fame for those who figured in the events that took place. {251}

The great figure of prechristian Erin is undoubtedly that of Cormac-Ard-ri-Cormace the First, who reigned in the early years of the third century.

"His reign," says Haverty, the historian, "is generally looked upon as the brightest epoch in the entire history of pagan Ireland." He established three colleges; one for war, one for history, and the third for jurisprudence. He collected and remodelled the laws, and published the code which remained in force throughout all Ireland until the English invasion (a period extending beyond *nine hundred years*), and which, outside the English pale, lingered for many centuries after! He assembled the bards and chroniclers at Tara, and directed them to collect the annals of Ireland, and to write out the records of the country from year to year, making them agree with the history of other countries, by collating events with the reigns of contemporary foreign potentates, Cormac himself having been the inventor of this kind of chronology. If this be so, the modern historians who claim to have been the originators of this cochronological scheme have an apology to make. These annals formed the "Psalter of Tara," which also contained full details of the boundaries of provinces, districts, and small divisions of land throughout Ireland. Unfortunately, this great record has been lost, no vestige of it being now, it is believed, in existence. {252}

The magnificence of Cormac's palace at Tara was commensurate with the greatness of his power and the brilliancy of his actions. He fitted out a fleet which he sent to harass the shores of Alba or Scotland, until that country also was compelled to acknowledge him as sovereign. He wrote a book, or tract, called "Teagusc-na-Ri," or the "Institutions of a Prince," which is still in existence, and which contains admirable maxims on manners, morals, and government. He died A.D. 266, at Cleitach, on the Boyne, a salmon-bone, it is said, having fastened in his throat while dining, and defied all efforts at extrication. He was buried at Ross-na-Ri, the first of the pagan monarchs for many generations who was not interred at Brugh, the famous burial-place of the prechristian kings. {253}

Ferguson's poem, classically entitled "The Burial of King Cormac," recounts the incident of his death at length, and picturesquely.

Cormac must have been altogether a glorious personage, judging from a description which has come down to us from an ancient Irish MS.:

"Beautiful was the appearance of Cormac (this was before he lost his eye) in that assembly. Flowing, slightly curling hair upon him; a red buckler with stars and animals of gold and fastening of silver upon him; a crimson cloak in wide, descending folds upon him, fastened at his breast by a golden brooch set with precious stones; a neck-torque of gold around his neck; a white shirt with a full collar, and intertwined with red-gold thread upon him; a girdle of gold inlaid with precious stones around him; two wonderful shoes of gold with runnings of gold upon him; two spears with golden sockets in his hand." {254}

This, then, is the description of the royal Cormac with his curling, golden hair and opulence of barbaric trappings, and the scenes over which he presided were surely in keeping with his magnificence, though only by a strong effort of imagination can they now be recalled.

The chief and most splendid structures of the interior of Ireland in ancient times were Emania and Tara. The former, the one-time palace of the kings of Ulster, was alleged to have been built about three hundred and fifty years before the Christian era. It existed as late as Columba's time, though it had ceased to be a royal residence; and the antiquarians, Camden and Speed, attest that fragmentary remains of this splendid establishment existed even in their day (seventeenth century). If this be really so, the ruin, if it could even be called by so explicit a name, must have been one of the most ancient existing in northern climes.

Tara was a place of greater, and yet more modern, celebrity. It was situated in the plain of Bregia, which extended between the Boyne,

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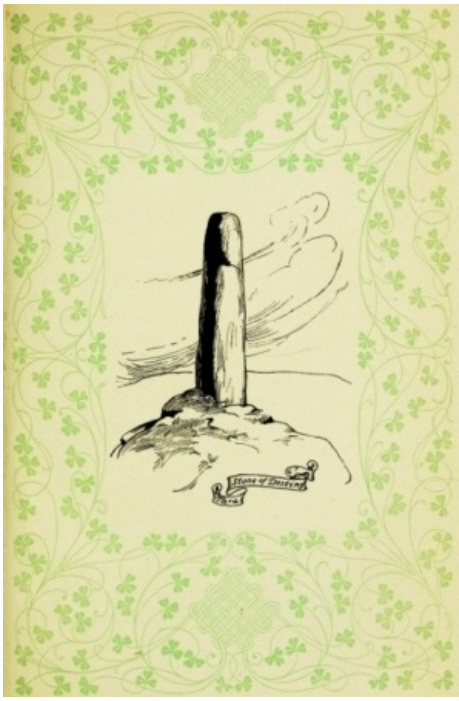


The Stone of Destiny, Tara

the Liffey, and the sea, and was preëminent above all other edifices as having been the residence of Irish kings for upwards of a thousand years. {257}

A contributor to the "Transactions of the Royal Irish Academy," writing in 1830, has described Tara as it appeared to him on a recent visit:

"Only when one finds himself at the base of the venerable mount does it present an attitude of much interest. At the left are the gloomy remains of the church of Screen and the once noble mansion and demesne of Lord Tara, back of which are the remains of several old stone edifices and of a particularly narrow bridge which still spans a weedy rivulet. Passing through the villages and by the church, one identifies some large rocks as having exercised the strength or yielded to the sword of Fin MacComhal (Fingal). Here one finds himself on the summit of Tara; and if he goes there with none of that wild enthusiasm which requires towers and battlements and draw-bridges and bower-windows, and donjon-keeps, to gratify it, he will feel most awfully the unalterable royalty of the prospect it commands. {258}

"When the natural advantages of the scene have obtained their due homage, let the visitor look for vestiges of the past, and there he will not be disappointed; for the place seemeth to bear the shew of an ancient and famous monument."

All of which observations are sufficiently noncommittal to be undisputed; and unless one is an arrant idol-breaker,—and we haven't many in these days,—he will be quite willing to accept the description as being sufficiently explicit to permit of his putting himself in the same place, and making the same observations.

The site is assuredly authentic, and the link of history which binds its past with the present is something more than a suggestion; though by no means need we seek or envy the emotions which inspired Moore's verses:

"The harp that once through Tara's Halls
The soul of music shed,
Now hangs as mute on Tara's walls,
As if that soul were fled,—
So sleeps the pride of former days,
So glory's thrill is o'er,
And hearts that once beat high for praise,
Now feel that pulse no more. {259}

"No more to chiefs and ladies bright
The harp of Tara swells,
The chord alone, that breaks at night,
Its tale of ruin tells.
Thus freedom now so seldom wakes
The only throb she gives,
Is when some heart indignant breaks
To show that she still lives."

Near Drogheda is Monasterboice, a collection of celebrated ecclesiastical ruins. Within an enclosed churchyard, which stands quite apart from any settlement of to-day, are two tiny chapels, a round tower of considerable proportions (110 feet high and 50 feet in circumference at its base), and three stone crosses, the principal of which, known as St. Boyne's Cross, is reputedly the most ancient religious relique now standing in Ireland. Among its rude sculptures, there is an inscription in Irish characters, in which is plainly legible the name of *Murelach*, a king of Ireland who died in 534, about one hundred years after the arrival of St. Patrick. The height of this cross is twenty-seven feet, and it is composed of two stones. The shafts are divided into compartments ornamented with figures. One group represents "a couple of harpers in paradise," of which {260} Köhl says: "No Irishman of the olden times would have thought paradise complete without his beloved national instrument."

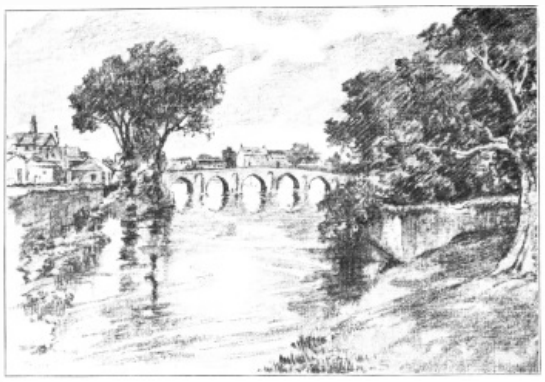
This recalls Lover's verses, but whether or no so rude a symbolism inspired them it is impossible to state.

"Oh! give me one strain
Of that wild harp again,
In melody proudly its own,
Sweet harp of the days that are gone."

The entire region of the Boyne valley is rich in tradition and history, far more so than any other area of its size in Ireland.

From Drogheda, at the river's mouth, to Trim, just beyond Tara, and to Kells on the Blackwater (not to be confounded with the Blackwater of the south), the Boyne's chief tributary, is scarce fifty miles; but there are a succession of shrines of history of which even the most unfamiliar are household words.

At Trim one is in the midst of military and ecclesiastical ruins which will make the lover of architectural remains long for the opportunity of knowing them better. There is the {261}



TRIM.

usual "King John's Castle," in reality Dangan Castle, an ancient military erection of the De Lacys, commonly {263} called, and apparently with justification, "the finest example of Anglo-Norman military architecture in Ireland."

It was founded in 1170 by the De Lacy who was given, by Henry II., the lordship of Meath, one of the five original kingdoms of Ireland.

The original structure was burnt to prevent its falling into the hands of Roderic, King of Connaught. The present remains date from 1220, and, though locally known as "King John's Castle," the records tell us that the monarch himself is only known to have visited Trim for but two days; hence his occupancy, if not his actual proprietorship, was very brief.

It must, truly, have been formerly a magnificent work of its kind, its shape being triangular, as is that noblest of all Anglo-Norman castles, Chateau Gaillard in Normandy.

Ten flanking towers protected its gateways, which, in their turn, were preceded each by a barbican. The most imposing of its details, which is more or less intact, is the keep, a massive tower sixty-four feet square and sixty feet in height. In this detail it differed greatly from its Norman brothers and sisters: in that at {264}

Chateau Gaillard, and others in Normandy, the keep was invariably circular.

Trim's ecclesiastical history dates back to the foundation of a church here by St. Patrick in the fifth century. Its site is perpetuated to-day by the famous Yellow Tower of the church of St. Mary's Abbey, the most lofty Anglo-Norman erection in Ireland (125 feet). Its outlines and stages were reduced nearly to ruin by Cromwell's warriors, but enough remains to-day to suggest that its former functions of watch-tower and refuge must have been most efficient.

"Literary pilgrims" will be more interested perhaps in visiting the tiny parish of Laracar, so indelibly associated with the lives of Swift and his "Stella." It lies but two short miles south of Trim, and is still one of those delightful, unspoiled, old-time villages which one occasionally comes across. Swift was the incumbent of this parish in 1699, and "Stella," chaperoned by Mrs. Dingley, was quartered here in lodgings. The ladies moved into the glebe-house, so literary gossip says, when Swift was on his travels, and the "Journal to Stella" {265} was addressed there. Swift's house, now but a fragment of a ruin, remains, as also the church in which "dearly beloved Roger" was clerk.

Down the Boyne from Trim one comes first to Bective Abbey, which, according to a local authority, differs from every other monastic establishment in the kingdom, in that it was a monastic castle or fortress. It was a Cistercian foundation of the twelfth century, first endowed by O'Melaghlin, a prince of Meath. It is a fine ruin to-day, and, although the parts of its original outlines are somewhat lost, the pointed fenestration is remarkable and unusually well preserved. Hugh de Lacy, after his assassination at Durrow Castle, was brought here for burial, but his head was interred in the tomb of Rosa de Monmouth in the Abbey of St. Thomas at Dublin.

Here one is in the immediate vicinity of Tara and its famous hill, the site of Ireland's most celebrated and splendid kingly residence.

Between Tara and Kells is Navan, which, of itself, is an ordinary "market town," with nothing to commend it to the lover of beauty and history but its immediate vicinity to the junction of the rivers {266} Blackwater and Boyne. This particular spot, just below Navan, is one of exceptional charm, though, as has been truly said, "the people of Navan have turned their backs upon it," and from scarce a spot in the town itself can a glimpse of either stream be had.

Navan has a past decidedly more interesting than its present. Its ancient patronymic was *Nuachongbhail*, and it was one of the earliest fortified places in the county of Meath. Hugh de Lacy walled it around; but remains of this work have now almost disappeared, though there are still some very tangible evidences of the "earliest style of fortifications known in Erin" in the Great Moat of Navan.

The Round Tower of Donaghmore, the most perfect of its kind in Ireland, and the ruins of Donaghmore church, are near by. Professor Flinders Petrie ascribes the date of the tower to the tenth century. It is one hundred feet in height, and its base circumference is sixty-six and a half feet. He further describes the remarkable doorway as having "a figure of Our Saviour, crucified, sculptured in relief on its keystone and the stone immediately above

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The Round Tower, Kells

it." This fact should establish beyond all doubt that the motive of these great round towers of Ireland, or at {269} least of this particular one, was Christian and not pagan.

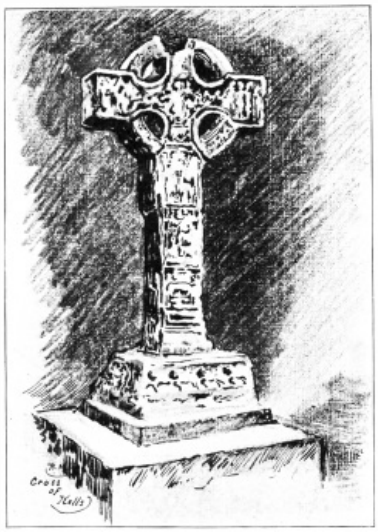
One is bound to visit Kells if only to take cognizance of its famous market-cross. Kells, in the county of Meath, is, or should be, coupled, in the minds of visitors, with the name of Tara. They have nothing in common, but they are neighbours, and properly should be seen in connection with each other. Tara presents, at first glance, nothing more than a small conical elevation rising above the Boyne; but its memories as the residence of the magnificent Cormac, St. Patrick, the Druids, the law-givers, the bards, and all the ancient

prehistoric civilization which centred around it, are very great.

Kells is a dozen or more miles from Tara, and should not be confounded with Kells in Kilkenny. Kells was granted to St. Columba in the sixth century, and a small house still exists which is fondly believed to have been either the oratory or the residence of the saint.

In the market-place of Kells was built a castle, in 1178, and opposite to it was erected a stone cross, {270} reputedly the most beautiful of its class known. As to just what was the precise and full significance of these famous crosses, which abound in Ireland, authorities, self-styled ecclesiastical experts, and genuine archæologists alike, fail to agree. Certainly nothing has puzzled people more than the scenes depicted on the bases of some of the crosses. At Kells, for instance, there is, on one side of the base, a hunting-scene, where a man with a shield and spear, preceded by a dog, pursues a collection of animals, among which we may distinguish two stags, a pig, a monstrous bird, and three other animals. On another side there are two centaurs, one armed with a trident, the other with bow and arrow, and having a bird on its back. There also is a bird with a fish in its talons, and another bird on a quadruped of some kind. On the third side there is a contest between foot-soldiers, and on the fourth a procession of four mounted warriors.

Primarily, of course, the significance of these crosses was Christian, but whether or not of the {271} superstitious order, as were the gargoyles and grotesque water-spouts seen so



THE CROSS OF KELLS.

frequently on continental churches, is apparently a matter of doubt. {273}

The subjects pictured on many of these crosses can hardly be assumed to be Scriptural, and are certainly not appropriate to the ideas of Christian art of our own time, nor indeed with those which were put to use in churches and monasteries in the Middle Ages. It has been suggested that they represent lingering pagan notions of the Happy Otherworld of the Celts, since hunting and fighting were among their principal joys; but this again is mere conjecture, and, though pagan influences had perhaps not wholly died out when this cross of Kells was first set up, it is hardly likely that pagan enthusiasm would express itself on a Christian symbol.

The crosses of Monasterboice, Kells, Clonmacnois, and Durrow were all either in, or on the very border of, the ancient kingdom of Meath, and may perhaps be grouped together as belonging to a local school which ranked perhaps above all others in the magnitude and beauty of its sculpture.

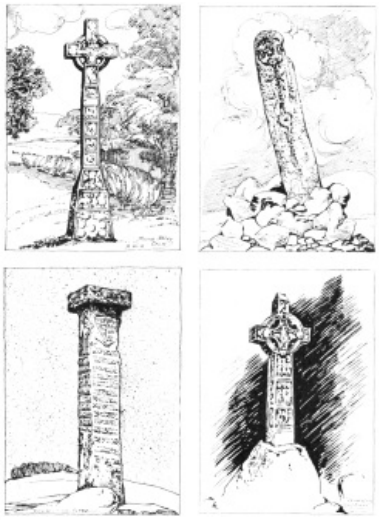
Many other crosses, which once existed throughout Ireland, are now known only by a broken fragment of {274} the shaft, or a base, which may or may not preserve the inscription; and it seems quite probable that no ecclesiastical centre existed which did not, at one time, boast of its Celtic cross standing as a dominant monument of art among all other memorials.

The great question which the antiquaries have apparently yet to settle among themselves is as to whether the decoration of these stone crosses, so different from other sculptured stone work to be seen in churches and elsewhere, is really the result of Celtic inspiration, or not.

It certainly is partly Roman and partly Byzantine in its motive, though unquestionably the development of the idea was distinctively Celtic or Irish.

From ancient records one learns that the Irish craftsmen first worked out their ideas, not on stone, but on parchment, and that these were transferred from illuminated MSS. to the crosses, and again in metal work, where so many similar designs are seen.

It is a popular supposition that these motives, spirals, frets, and interlaced bands originated in Ireland or were peculiar to Celtic art. But {275}



CROSSES OF CLONMACNOIS, DONEGAL, SLANE, AND MOONE ABBEY.

really the origin of these ornaments and their travels from one country to another show quite the contrary to be the case. Investigation has shown that early civilization, advancing along primitive trade routes, or, more generally, on the lines of communication between different countries or races, was responsible for the diffusion of many arts that have been wrongly ascribed as having been born in one locality or another. Scandinavia, Greece, Egypt, and even farther east, all contributed something, no doubt, to what afterward became known as Celtic art; just how much, or by what process, is the question to decide. {277}

At any rate, the result achieved by the artisans who carved these ancient Irish crosses, whatever may have been their source of inspiration, indicates that they were the work of no "'prentice hand." It is evident that no mere underling or stone-cutter chiseled out spiral, fret, and knot, and twisted zoomorph, which one sees on these crosses. It was a master-mind that planned and a master-hand that drew the same patterns on many an Irish vellum. And it was in the depth of the dark ages, too, that Ireland set this bright example to Europe. In the twelfth century one of her books, then perhaps four hundred years old, compelled the {278} admiration of Gerald of Wales, in most things her detractor. "If you examine the drawings closely," he says, "you will find them so delicate and exquisite, so finely drawn, and the work of interlacing so elaborate, while the colours with which they are illuminated are so blended, and still so fresh, that you will be ready to assert that all this is the work of angelic, and not human skill." This is certainly high praise; but, within its limits, the early Irish school of decorative art, in its best products, whether on parchment, metal, or stone, has, of its kind, been hitherto unsurpassed by man.

Though the market-cross of Kells is not perfectly preserved—its top is broken off—it may be considered, with that at Monasterboice, to be a remarkable expression of the art of stone-carving. There are a notable richness and elaboration of detail most curious and quite unique.

In the churchyard are three other crosses of lesser importance, though one of them is over eleven feet in height. {279}

HOLY WELL, KELLS.

The famous "Book of Kells," a manuscript copy of the Gospels in Latin, dating from the eighth century {281} and described as the "most elaborately executed monument (*sic*) of early Christian art now extant," is preserved in the library of Trinity College, Dublin.

Next to the idyllic and vague figure of Erin, and the more definite, but still apocryphal, one of St. Patrick, that of St. Columba, the real founder of the religious community of Kells, stands out the most prominently. To his era belonged a glorious race of scholars, all of whom gained their learning from the many universities, convents, and monasteries which covered the island. Among those most prominent are the names, first of all, of St. Columba, or Columcille (Dove of the Cell); St. Columbanus; St. Gall, who evangelized Helvetia; St. Livinus, who suffered martyrdom in Flanders; St. Argobast, who became Bishop of Strasburg; and St. Killian.

Columba's history is well set forth in sundry places, and is too extended to recount here. Suffice to say that the events of his life were most dramatic, and his attachment to learning, poetry, and literature, in {282} particular, most profound.

Montalembert, the historian, says:

"He was a poet and writer of a high order of genius, and to an advanced period of his life remained an ardent devotee of the muse, ever powerfully moved by whatever affected the weal of the minstrel fraternity. His passion for books (all manuscript, of course, in those days, and of great rarity and value) was destined to lead him into that great offence of his life, which he was afterward to expiate by a penance so grievous. He went everywhere in search of volumes which he could borrow or copy; often experiencing refusals which he resented bitterly."

In the following manner occurred what Montalembert calls "the decisive event which changed the destiny of Columba, and transformed him from a wandering poet and ardent bookworm into a missionary and apostle."

"While visiting one of his former tutors, Finian, he found means to copy clandestinely the abbot's Psalter by shutting himself up at nights in the church where the book was deposited. Indignant at what he considered as almost a theft, Finian claimed the copy when it was finished by Columba, on the ground that a {283} copy made without permission ought to belong to the master of the original, seeing that the transcription is the son of the original book. Columba refused to give up his work, and the question was referred to the king in his palace of Tara."

What immediately followed, and its sequel, should be read in the words of Montalembert. The accusation of theft, or something akin to burglary, was followed by Columba's withdrawal to his native province of Tyrconnell, where he set to work to excite the natives to proceed against King Diarmid, who had decided against him.

"Diarmid marched to meet them in battle at Cul-Dreimhne, upon the borders of Ultonia and Connacia. He was completely beaten, and was obliged to take refuge at Tara. The victory was due, according to the annalist Tighernach, to the prayers and songs of Columba, who had fasted and prayed with all his might to obtain from Heaven the punishment of the royal insolence, and who, besides, was present at the battle, *and took upon himself before all men the responsibility of the bloodshed*." {284}

As for the manuscript which had been the object of this strange conflict of copyright, elevated into a civil war, it was afterward venerated as a kind of natural military and religious palladium. Under the name of Cathach or Fightu, the Latin Psalter transcribed by Columba, enshrined in a sort of portable altar, became the national relic of the O'Donnell clan. For more than a thousand years it was carried with them to battle as a pledge of victory, on the condition of being supported on the breast of a clerk free from all mortal sin.

Still struggling with a stubborn self-will, Columba found his life miserable, unhappy, and full of unrest; yet remorse had even now "planted in his soul the germs at once of a startling conversion and of his future apostolic mission." Various legends reveal him to us at this crisis of his life, wandering long from solitude to solitude, and from monastery to monastery, seeking out holy monks, masters of penitence and Christian virtue, and asking them anxiously what he should do to obtain the pardon of God for the murder of so many {285} victims as was caused by the battle of Cul-Dreimhne.

At length, after many wanderings in contrition and mortification, "he found the light which he sought from a holy monk, St. Molaise, famed for his studies of Holy Scripture, and who had already been his confessor.

"This severe hermit confirmed the decision of the synod; but, to the obligation of converting to the Christian faith an equal number of pagans as there were of Christians killed in the civil war, he added a new condition, which bore cruelly upon a soul so passionately attached to country and kindred. The confessor condemned his penitent to *perpetual exile from Ireland*!"

This was more hard than to bare his breast to the piercing sword; less welcome than to walk in constant punishment and suffering, so long as his feet pressed the soil of his worshipped Erin!

But it was even so. Thus ran the sentence of Molaise: "*Perpetual exile from Ireland!*"

Staggered, stunned, struck to the heart, Columba could not speak for a moment. But God gave him in {286} that great crisis of his life the supreme grace to bear the blow and embrace the cross presented to him. At last he spoke, and in a voice choked by emotion he answered: "Be it so; what you have commanded shall be done." From that instant his life was one long penitential sacrifice. For thirty years he lived and laboured in the distant Iona, and the fame of his sanctity and devotion filled the world.

As a farewell gift to some Irish visitors at Iona, Columba presented the following verses, deservedly classed among the world's beautiful poetic compositions. The literal translation into English doubtless loses much of the original beauty, but enough, at least, is left to indicate the charm of the original Gaelic thought and sentiment.

“What joy to fly upon the white-crested sea; and watch the waves break upon the Irish shore!

. . . . . .

“My foot is in my little boat; but my sad heart ever bleeds!

“*There is a gray eye which ever turns to Erin; but never in this life shall it see Erin, nor her sons, nor her daughters!* {287}

“From the high prow I look over the sea; and great tears are in my eyes when I turn to Erin—

“To Erin, where the songs of the birds are so sweet, and where the clerks sing like the birds;

“Where the young are so gentle, and the old are so wise; where the great men are so noble to look at, and the women so fair to wed!

“Young traveller! carry my sorrows with you; carry them to Comgall of eternal life!

“Noble youth, take my prayer with thee, and my blessing; one part for Ireland—seven times may she be blest—and the other for Albyn.

“Carry my blessings across the sea; carry it to the West. My heart is broken in my breast!

“If death comes suddenly to me, it will be because of greatest love I bear to the Gael!”

It was to the rugged and desolate Hebrides that Columba turned his face when he accepted the terrible penance of perpetual exile.

Columba did return to Ireland, as history tells. But, though this may be traditional, he returned blindfolded. “The Dove of the Cell” made a comparatively long stay in Ireland, visiting with scarf-bound brow the numerous monastic establishments subject to his rule. At length he returned to Iona, where, far into the {288} evening of life, he waited for his summons to the beatific vision. The miracles he wrought, attested by evidence of sufficient weight to move the most callous skeptic, the myriad wondrous signs of God’s favour that marked his daily acts, filled all the nations with awe. The hour and the manner of his death had long been revealed to him. The precise time he concealed from those about him until close upon the last day of his life; but the manner of his death he long foretold to his attendants. “I shall die,” he said, “without sickness or hurt; suddenly, but happily, and without accident.” At length one day, while in his usual health, he disclosed to Diarmid, his “minister,” or regular attendant monk, that the hour of his summons was nigh. A week before he had gone around the island, taking leave of the monks and labourers; and when all wept, he strove anxiously to console them. Then he blessed the island and the inhabitants. “And now,” said he to Diarmid, “here is a secret; but you must keep it till I am gone. This is Saturday, the day called Sabbath, or day of rest: and that it will be to me, for it shall be the last of my laborious life.” In the evening he retired to his cell, and {289} began to work for the last time, being then occupied in transcribing the Psalter. When he had come to the thirty-third Psalm, and the verse, “*Inquirentes autem Dominum non deficient omni bono*,” he stopped short. “I cease here,” said he; “Baithin must do the rest.”

The above is an abridgment of Montalembert’s chronicle which must be accepted as truthful. It certainly is as profound and interesting an account of Christian martyrdom and devotion as any extant. {290}

CHAPTER XII.

BELFAST AND ARMAGH

THE stranger to Ireland will never imagine, as the result of his visit to Belfast, that the land is the home of the effete civilization that some English writers would have him believe.

Belfast, more than all other centres of population in Ireland, more even than Dublin, the capital, is the equal of any city of its size in the known world for transportation facilities of a thoroughly up-to-date order.

This, perhaps, does not aid in any way in the serious contemplation of its other charms; but it is a significant “sign of the times,” nevertheless.

Savants will tell one that here, at the head of Belfast Lough, was fought, in the year 665, a great battle between the Ulidians and the Cruthni. This event is sufficiently remote to have lost some interest, and {291} appears somewhat lacking in appeal in view of what happened afterward, though the region in the immediate vicinity of Belfast does not abound in the wealth of interesting shrines which exist in most other parts of Ireland.

John de Courcy built a fortified castle here in 1177, after Ulster had been granted to him by Henry II., but no trace of it remains to-day.

The city really owes its rise, however, to the Scottish settlers who came here in large numbers in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Before which time, says one writer, “the town consisted of but one hundred and twenty odd huts, and a castle roofed with shingles.”

It is on record that the town made a vigorous protest against the execution of Charles I., as might have been expected from its religious and political tendencies. In connection with this protest the usually gentle Milton wrote contemptuously concerning “the blockish presbyters of Clandeboye.... The unhallowed priestlings of an unchristian synagogue.”

The town was incorporated in 1613, but was only given civic dignity in 1888, when its population had {292} grown to 250,000 from its previous minute proportions. The name of the city is evolved from *Bel*, a ford or river-mouth, and *fearsal*, a sand-bank.

The chief features of interest in the city proper are unquestionably its attributes of modernity. With such aspects this book has little to do. This is not so, however, with its famous flax and linen industries, made familiar to children of all nations in their very earliest years, when they are given for playthings the spools or bobbins of Barbour’s linen thread, with the gaudy end label picturing the “bloody hand of Ulster.”

The linen industry in Ireland can be traced as far back as 1216, and, in the reign of Henry III., the spinning of linen thread was established as a definite branch of the trade. In 1665 the head of the house of Ormonde, the unfortunate duke, obtained an Act of Parliament for the encouragement of the industry.

Up to 1805 linen yarns appear to have been universally spun by hand. Then abortive attempts were made to introduce machinery, but it was only after 1828, when the industry was freed from the restrictive {293} legislation which had been in force since Queen Anne’s time, that healthy competition among enterprising private firms finally did away with hand spinning.

From that time onward the Irish linen industry developed with great rapidity, especially in Belfast, which is the principal seat of the trade in the United Kingdoms.

The chief archæological treasures of Belfast are Cave Hill, three miles north of the city, which is a curious geological formation possessing three caves, which may or may not have more than a geological interest; and “the Giant’s Ring,” lying to the southward near Ballylesson. This latter is an object of antiquarian regard, consisting of a great circular earthwork, a third of a mile or more in circumference, which encloses a mound of earth about perhaps eighty feet in diameter.

There is also a stone altar, or cromlech, assigned by some to druidical inception, and again denied. At any rate, it is one of those curious artificial erections in which the British Isles and Brittany abound, and its {294} actual significance may be great or little. It is impossible, apparently, for the doctors to agree among themselves.

There is also a castle at Belfast,—it’s an exceedingly impoverished town in Ireland that hasn’t a castle,—though in this case it is merely an imposing residence dignified, or glorified, by the more ancient name. It has, however, a wonderful outlook over the lough, showing, under certain conditions of the atmosphere, the Scottish coast and the Isle of Man.

It is, however, the note of modernity alone which sounds in Belfast, as one might naturally expect of a city which has now reached a population of around four hundred thousand souls and has doubled its numbers in thirty years.

One industry of general interest in these days of universal travel is the great shipbuilding works at Queen’s Island. Twelve thousand hands are employed, and the construction of such leviathans as the great White Star liners, the *Oceanic*, the *Celtic*, and the *Baltic*, of a tonnage exceeding twenty thousand, is an art of which their builders are apparently the sole possessors.

As might further be expected, the shipping trade of Belfast is considerable, and the city more than holds {295} its own in progress in this line with any in the three kingdoms.

Within the immediate vicinity of Belfast—at least within the area of the great city’s influence—is the sleepy old town of Carrickfergus, once the site of one of the most powerful fortresses in Ireland. Now it is but a memory, so far as its impregnability goes, though its remains are suggestive enough of the position it once occupied; one of great strategic value when the means of ancient warfare are considered.

If the “bloody hand of Ulster” should ever grasp firearms and enter into warfare again, the result might be different to this old castle of Carrickfergus, one of the few in Ireland which are not claimed as having belonged to King John.

Southward toward Armagh one first comes to Lisburn, noted principally for its great damask industry. It is truly enough a busy manufacturing town, and has thrived amazingly since the linen manufacture was

introduced by the Huguenots who fled to this refuge after the Edict of Nantes.

The cathedral here contains a monument to Jeremy Taylor, who was bishop of County Down. Referring to {296} Taylor's tenure in Ireland, it has been the custom to recount it thus:

"Under the restoration of Charles II. he was given a bishopric in the wilds of Ireland, in a sour, gloomy country, with sour, gloomy looks all around him ... which broke him at the age of fifty-five."

Part of this is true, the latter part, but it was not the gloomy, sour wilds around Lisburn that did it, for the whole neighbourhood around about is a charming place, and must have been then. It seems, indeed, always to smile, and, though possessed of no great grandeur, such as rugged peaks and roaring waters, it in every way fulfils one's idea of a busy town, charmingly environed.

Armagh is to-day a "cathedral town" which possesses two cathedrals. One is the ancient and venerable cathedral which belongs to the Established Church, and dates from the thirteenth century; and the other is the modern Roman Catholic Cathedral, which dates only from 1873.

Armagh is now, as it always has been, a most important centre of religious and churchly activity. {297}

St. Patrick came here to preach the gospel in 432, and a quarter of a century later founded the Church of Armagh. The first edifice endured for nearly four hundred years when it was sacked by the Danes. Reërected again in 1268, it was burned by Shane O'Neill in the sixteenth century, and rebuilt and again burned inside the next half-century. The final rebuilding, or rather the building up from the old fire-swept remains of the ancient structure, took place at the instigation and expense of the Primate Margetson. Armagh is one of the metropolitan sees of Ireland, Dublin being the other; but the Archbishop of Armagh is Primate of Ireland.

The chief centre of interest in Armagh lies with the church and its foundation, though, of itself, Armagh is what many other towns of as great promise are not,—a charmingly unspoiled old-world spot which, in spite of the advent of the steam railway, the telegraph, and the telephone, apparently conducts its daily life much as it did three-quarters of a century ago.

It is a well-kept little city or town, with no great evidences of modern improvements, though nowhere are {298} there any indications of squalor or decay.

In the year 685 Aldfred, son of Ossory, became King of Northumberland. He was educated at Armagh, then a world-famed school of learning, and had written some verses in the Irish tongue descriptive of his impressions of Ireland.

Translated into English his descriptions might apply to-day.

"I travelled its fruitful provinces round,
And in every one of the five I found,
Alike in church and in palace hall,
Abundant apparel, and food for all."

This sounds to-day somewhat like triviality. Perhaps, however, it has lost some of its virtues by translation. Another stanza reads somewhat more melodiously:

"I found in Meath's fair principality
Virtue, vigour, and hospitality;
Candour, joyfulness, bravery, purity,
Ireland's bulwark and security."

THE END.

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